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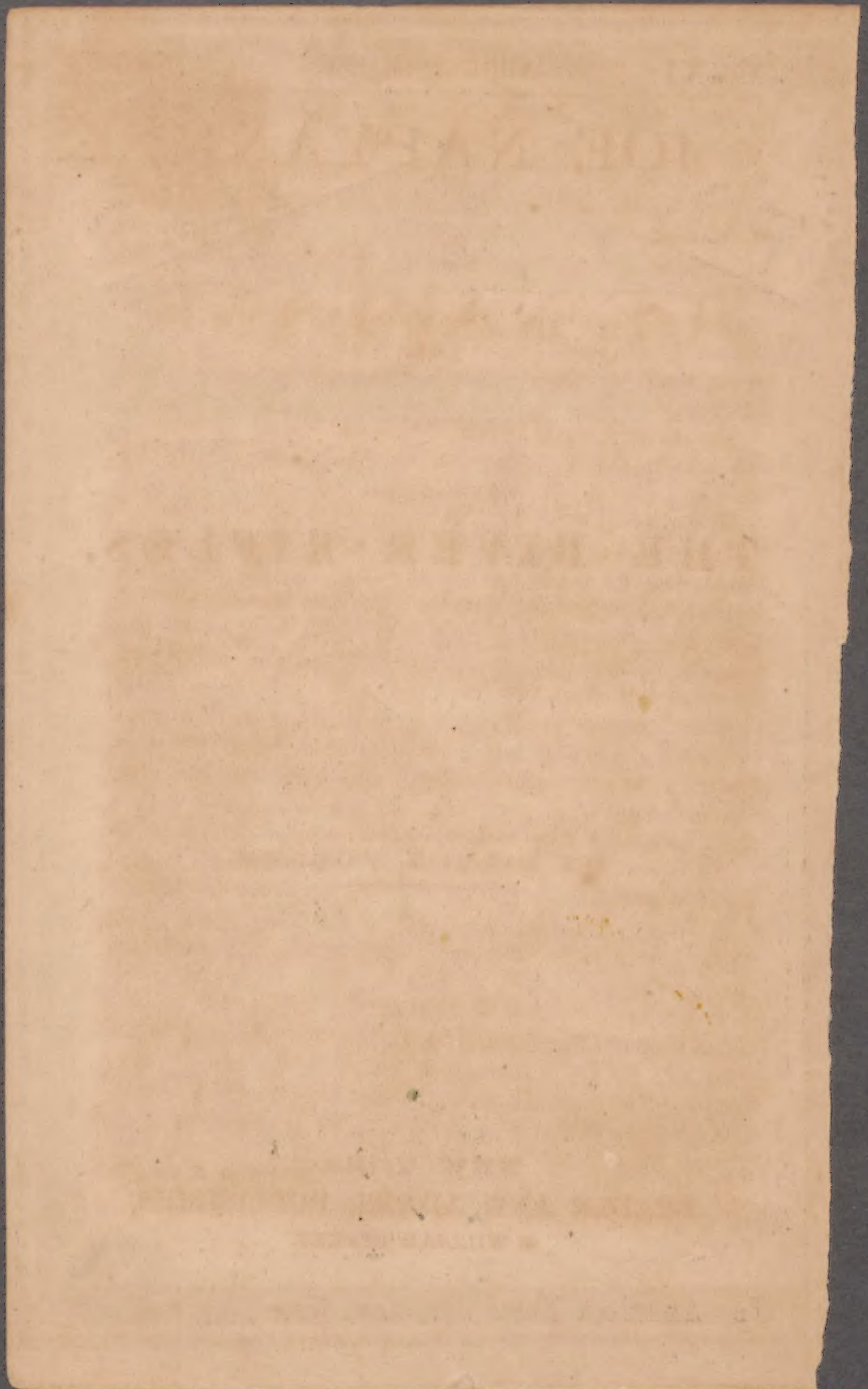


Joe Napyank.

56



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JOE NAPYANK;

OR,

CHAPTER I.

THE RIVER RIFLES.

BY BILLEX MULLER.

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JOE NAPYANK.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE OHIO.

"I've had a pretty good tramp to day, that's sartin!" Such was the exclamation of a tall, gaunt, ungainly hunter,—Joe Napyank, as he dropped the butt of his rifle upon the ground, and folding his arms over the muzzle, looked out upon the broad Ohio, rolling by in quiet grandeur.

"I've tramped nigh unto twenty miles without once stopping; and, when a fellow goes that distance through woods, cane-brakes, and thickets, dodging the redskins and varmints, it's no wonder if he's a *leetle* blowed. Can't be I'm too late after all."

The thought seemed to bring him some discomfort for a moment.

"No; it can't be, no need of thinking that. I've made pretty good time, and have struck the river low 'nough down."

From his position, a view of the Ohio, for several miles below was afforded him, but the prospect above was cut off by a sweeping bend in the river. The hunter—for such he evidently was—took a long searching scrutiny of the river below, as if in quest of some object. Suddenly he started.

"Yonder is something that's sartin, but it must be an Injin canoe. Yes, I know it is."

The object referred to was simply a dark speck, gliding straight across the stream. In a few moments, it struck the other shore and as speedily disappeared.

"Yes; that's a canoe, that can be told by the way it acts. It's plain McGowan has not reached this point yet."

Thus satisfied beyond all conjecture, Joe took a seat upon a tree, prepared to wait the appearance of some object. As we have already remarked, he was very tall and remarkably attenuated,—his weight barely a hundred pounds, while his height was fully six feet. His features were sharp and angular, characteristic more of the New Englander than of his native state of New York. His face seemed as devoid of beard as a child's; but he had a pleasant blue eye, and there was an expression of good nature on his face, more prepossessing than otherwise. When he talked or laughed he displayed a fine set of teeth, and a remarkably musical voice. His hair was sandy and almost as long and straight as an Indian's.

Joe Napyhank sat some time in a reverie, when chancing to raise his head, he saw in full sight, coming around the bend above, a goodly sized flat boat, such as were frequently seen upon the western waters, three-quarters of a century since. The hunter's eyes sparkled.

"That's McGowan! I knowed he couldn't be far out of the way. I don't see any of 'em on the look out, which, howsomever, is a good sign, as it's one that ought to do the looking out,—that is such looking out as makes me show myself."

Joe kept his seat for a few minutes longer, and then withdrawing into the wood so as to conceal himself, he deliberately raised his gun and discharged it in the direction of the flat-boat and then, dropping his piece, looked to see the result.

He caught a glimpse of two or three hats moving

around near the stern of the boat. Enough to satisfy him, that his friends were not asleep, nor so reckless as to expose themselves, when no possible good could result from it. The hunter now stepped forward, and called out,

"Helloa there, you, can't you take a poor fellow on board?"

All this time, he was careful to keep his body concealed; and, observing, that his eall attracted no notice, he speedily repeated it, still hiding his body, and disguising his voice as much as possible.

"I say you, won't you take a poor fellow on board, that's been badly cut up by the Injins, and can't get off."

Still there was not the least sign that his words were heard, which perhaps rather curiously did not seem to displease the hunter. By this time, the flat-boat had approached a point directly opposite, so that he was compelled to begin walking to keep pace with it. This he managed to do, without exposing himself to the inquiring eyes, that he knew was piercing out upon him.

"I say, be you so cruel as to leave a poor wounded man of your own race and blood to perish among these outrageous Injins?"

Still no response, and the hunter tried it once more.

"Can't you let me know that your hear me."

A moment later, a huge red face appeared over the gunwale,

"Git out! you can't come that game over me."

Joe Napyank now stepped forth to view, and swung his hat with a loud laugh.

"That's right, McGowan, belive every man in these parts an enemy till he's proved a friend."

The same rubicund face rose like the moon over the horizon of the high gunwale, and a cheery laugh rolled over the water-

"Ha! ha! ha! you can't hide that voice of yours, Joe; I knowed you all the time."

"You did, eh?" replied the hunter somewhat crest-fallen. "why didn't you answer me then?"

"You didn't apply in the proper manner,—that's it, ha! ha! ha! Now when you show yourself like a man, I'll notice you. I suppose you want to come on board."

"If you've no objection, I should like to do so."

"How do you propose to do it?"

"I 'pose you work your old pile of lumber into shore."

"No, you don't. It would be a little better if you should work yourself a little *out* from shore."

The hunter could not avoid laughing at the good natured shrewdness displayed by McGowan.

"I'm glad to see you've larned something. 'Twouldn't be safe to get along the shore when there's no current."

"What made you ask me to do it then?"

"Just to see whether you had enough sense not to mind me. I tell you what you can do through, McGowan," added Napyank in a more serious voice.

"What's that?"

"Work the boat a little toward this bank so that I can wade out to you. A few yards will answer."

"I Suppose there is no objection to that, but you will have to go down stream a little further."

"Of course."

The long sweeping oars that were hung at either end of the flat-boat were now called into requisition and applied by seemingly invisible hands. Under their influence, the huge unwieldy mass of lumber began sidling toward the bank, somewhat after the fashion of a cautious turtle, that had not made up his mind as yet, whether he was doing an exactly proper thing or not. The hunter kept pace with it, manifesting considerable anxiety, and surveying both shores, as though he were not satisfied with their appearance. One or two things had caught his eye that gave him some uneasiness, and he was rather impatient to get upon the

boat. This perhaps made the movements of McGowan and his friends unnecessarily tardy.

"There! I think that will do!" exclaimed the man on the flat boat. "Now see whether you can walk out to us."

But Joe was already several yards out in the stream, carefully feeling his way. The water slowly rose, so that he was to his arm-pits before he had passed half the intervening distance.

"Ay g-r-a-c-i-o-us!" he shivered out, as he tediously made his way along. "This is awful cold, and is getting deeper and deeper."

"Keep along. You're in the deepest part," cheered McGowan.

"I—I—don't know about that."

"A few more yards and you will be here."

"I—oogh!"

The last exclamation was forcibly ejected, as he suddenly dropped out of view. Just as McGowan's hearty laugh was ringing over the water, he shot upward again and struck out vigorously for the flat-boat.

"Confound it! Why didn' you tell a feller?"

"How could I know there was a hole there? Let your feet drop and see if they don't touch bottom."

The hunter did as was requested and was surprised to find that he was again in five-foot water.

"That's better," he added, as he rapidly neared the flat boat. "In a minute——"

Joe Napyank suddenly paused, at the sharp crack of several rifles upon the bank, and the whizz of the bullets in alarming proximity to his own person.

"Indians!" exclaimed McGowan, excitedly. "Quick Joe, for God's sake; you'll be killed!"

The hunter was fully impressed with the danger, and was making all haste toward the flat-boat. He sank down so that nothing but the upper part of his head was visible above water. The bullets rained like hail around his head but still he was unharmed.

"McGowan, can't you give 'em a shot?" he called out.

"I can try."

Saying which his gun was speedily raised and discharged among the shouting savages, who took no pains to conceal their bodies. The shot seemingly was a good one, for they scattered to cover like a flock of frightened partridges. During the temporary lull the hunter reached the flat-boat and with the assistance of two or three friendly hauds was received on board.

Tea Indians disappeared with almost the suddenness of magic. Not another yell was heard, not another gun fired. Five minutes after the discharge of the first shot, a stillness deep and profound reigned over wood and river.

For a long time those in the flat-boat maintained an unremitting watch upon both shores. More than once they were certain they saw some redskins leaping stealthily from cover to cover—they were in momentary expectation of another volley. But none came. It seemed as if the savages had been controlled entirely by the desire to slay or obtain possession of Napyank, and failing in this, they had quietly withdrawn.

"They have left, I guess," finally remarked Napyank.

"I don't know," replied McGowan, "it seems to me that every rod of these bordering woods, contain a dozen of the creatures, and it *does* seem as if they had all taken a great notion to watch us."

"No doubt about that, and they *will* keep on watching us till we reach the settlement, Have'nt they attacked you previous to this?"

"I should think they had. There hasn't been a night since we got fairly into the West, that they havn't tried to board us."

Joe Napyank, although an experienced hunter,

seemed really surprised to hear this. McGowan added by way of qualification,

"I speak the literal truth when I say there hasn't a night passed without some hostile attempt upon their part; but I must say, that it does seem to me that they didn't try very hard."

"That is queer. When Injins try such things, they're apt to do the best they can."

"Perhaps they had a good fear of the mettle of those on board this boat," smiled McGowan.

"Per-h-a-p-s," drawled the hunter, in a voice that was far more significant than a simple denial could have been.

"I don't think any of them have learned how many we have on board," added McGowan.

"It is well they didn't."

"But it is high time the inmates of the flat-boat should receive a more special introduction to the reader

Theophilus McGowan, the author of this emigration scheme, was a middle aged man of large frame, weighing considerably over two hundred pounds. He came from Western Pennsylvania, where he was a prominent citizen, greatly respected, having performed a very important part in the Revolutionary war, now brought to a close. He procured a wife as obese and genial-natured as himself, and a daughter as pretty and plump as it is safe to imagine. This was their only child, and, at first, it may seem hard to find a reason why he should leave his comfortable home and emigrate to this great solitude, the abode of the deadly red man. But it requires no prophetic eye, to see that this very region—the great West—was destined speedily to become settled, civilized, and one of the most important sections of the young nation. His experience in camp life and the vicissitudes of the great contest, had nurtured a roving disposition in him, and he had entered into the scheme with as much zest, as if he were a young man, and was in quest of a bride and a new home.

Associated with him was Abram Smith, a man somewhat younger than himself, who brought with him his two sons, Abram and Stoddard. Abram was a quiet, reserved sort of man like his father, and nearly thirty years of age. Both had the true mettle of the pioneer in them. Reticent and undemonstrative, yet they possessed that noiseless, unwavering determination, which could be checked by no obstacle that it was possible for human will to overcome. Every trial and difficulty they took as a matter of course, and it may be safely ventured that if father and son ever knew that it was appointed to run a gauntlet of Indians, in order to reach their destination, they would not have hesitated or turned aside for an instant.

Mrs. Smith was a cypher,—meek, uncomplaining, faithful, she went through her routine of duties, greatly after the manner of a machine that is regularly wound up and runs itself down. She would no more have dreamed of questioning the authority and wisdom of her husband, than a slave would have dared to dispute with a despot.

Stoddard Smith, who was several years younger than his brother, (it may as well be expressed at this point,) was prompted more by admiration of Ruth McGowan, than a love for this outrageous solitude. Brought up in the neighborhood, he had learned to look upon her with admiring eyes, and came in due time to be accepted as her lover, in preference to scores of others, who had cast longing looks in that direction. His disposition was such that he would have been pronounced a son of McGowan, far sooner than one of his rightful father. Free, open-hearted, brave almost to recklessness, sometimes noisy in his exuberance of spirits, he was the very antipode of his family.

“Friend and companion! I greet you,” was his salutation, as Joe Napyank came over the gunwale. “You seem rather anxious to see us.”

“And so would you be,” answered the hunter, as he

turned towards McGowan, and the other two devoted themselves to the danger that had sprung so suddenly upon them. A few more words which have been already recorded, and the conversation was reduced to disjointed sentences, principally occasioned by what was happening around them. Finally, when it became certain there was no fear of further molestation from the savages, they mingled more freely with each other. Mrs. McGowan and Smith came above and greeted the hunters, who was a most welcome addition to the party, and after remaining a few moments went below. Ruth, however, staid on deck in converse with her father, lover and Napyank. Abram Smith and father were at the bow, where they had abundant opportunity for their favorite pastime—silence.

“It seems to me you don’t look very much scart,” replied the hunter, addressing Ruth McGowan.

“I have been frightened for all that—but we are getting so accustomed to these Indians, that I am in constant expectation of their guns.”

“She was frightened enough when the first shot was fired the other day. She believed it was certainly all over with us,” said her father. “She aint so brave as you are trying to make out. I’ve no doubt she would run into the cabin, if we should be boarded by a half hundred of the red skins.”

“I’ve no doubt of it either,” returned Ruth, not detecting the quiet humor of her father, beneath the serious surface,

“Yes; she is a regular coward; I don’t know what we shall do with her in this western country. I almost wish we had left her at home.”

“I am sure you can’t wish it any more than I do,” rejoined the daughter, with some feeling. The father looked her quietly in the face a moment, and then with a pleasant smile drew her affectionately to his heart.

“No, my darling,” he said, as the tears came in his

eyes. "I would not have left you behind for the world."

Ruth covered her face, and for a few moments complete silence held reign. Joe Napvank considered the tableau quite interesting. Stoddard Smith was reflecting how truly he might appropriate the words just uttered by McGowan, and how decidedly agreeable it would be if he were her father for the time being.

In the meantime, the keen eye of the hunter was scrutinizing the Ohio and Kentucky shore in search of signs that it may be said were hardly ever invisible.

CHAPTER II.

NIGHT ON THE OHIO.—A VISITOR.—AN ORIGINAL CHARACTER.—PREMONITIONS OF DANGER.

The eagle eye of Napyank, the hunter, failed to detect anything suspicious. He knew that they were journeying through the most dangerous part of the great wilderness which at that day, stretched for hundreds of miles west of the Alleghanies. As he reflected upon the unanimity which his friends had enjoyed thus far, he could but wonder at the cause. There had others attempted this same project, and bitterly rued the day that the thought entered their heads.

Only a few months before, Napyank himself had attempted to pilot a flat-boat down the river. In the dead of night, when the whole crew were on the watch, a large body of Indians stole upon them, and in a twinkling had possession of the boat, and most of its inmates. What became of the unfortunate captives, none could tell, for neither Napyank, nor the two or three who escaped with him ever saw or heard of them again. But imagination can easily decide their fate, in the face of what was so well known to all those who had heard of the North American Indians.

The afternoon was far advanced, and still the flat-boat glided uninterruptedly forward. As yet no further sign of their enemies were visible. The vast forests lining the shores, were as quiet and motionless as if no man or animal had disturbed the solitude. The river flowed as placidly forward as it had for centuries. The sun had risen on the same scene that day

that it had thousands of times before, and was about to set as it had for ages, when this sudden evidence of the advancing white men made his appearance.

Not another sign of life except the whirring of a flock of birds overhead was seen. The flat-boat with its handfull of human beings, was alone in that great solitude floating slowly and gently down the river, in which hundreds of similar adventurers were yet to find their graves.

In a few moments, the flat-boat swept around a bend in the river, and came in view of another extended portion of the Ohio. Viewed from a distance, it had much the appearance of a huge square box floating aimlessly onward. At either end a lengthy oar was hung, which now and then some hand dipped into the water, when, after surging a few moments, it remained at rest. The box-like appearance of the boat, ended at the prow and astern, where it took more the shape of a lawful boat. The cabin ran the entire length, except at each end stern was left a space of sufficient dimensions to contain a half-dozen men. Above these spaces, the heavy bullet-proof planks rose for fully five feet. A small narrow window was pierced in the side, opening and shutting from within, while a trap-door above afforded still more secure means of obtaining light, or of affording egress to those within. The spaces referred to at the end communicated with the cabin, so that the entire length of the flat-boat could be traversed, without being exposed to a shot from the most vigilant enemy outside. This was McGowan's arrangement, and he deserved credit for the originality he had shown. Under his skillful management the lumbering vessel had been constructed into a regular floating fort. A hail-storm of bullets were as harmless as so many pebbles. To this fact, perhaps, may be attributed the remarkable good fortune that had attended our friends from the start. The ever-watchful savages, seeing such a craft,—so different from that which had usually met their gaze—

naturally supposed there was a formidable force behind it, and frequently were reluctant to attempt to board it.

Still Napyank was too experienced and shrewd to believe this state of things would last much longer. The prize was too tempting for the savages to allow it to glide quietly through their grasp.

The hunter informed McGowan, that he strongly suspected the real crisis was to come that night.

"Yes, sir, I do," he exclaimed in a low and emphatic tone. "Look out for night."

"If we get through that?"

"Well enough; you aint got much further to go."

"We'd better stay up to-night."

"Yes, sir."

"Then, I'll go below for awhile."

A moment later and Joe Napyank was left alone on the deck of the flat-boat.

As he stood with his right arm partly raised, resting upon the oar his keen nervous eyes fixed upon the river beyond, he was a fine specimen of the daring pioneer of the West.

Gradually the day waned and the gloomy shadows lengthened over the river. The great wilderness became darker and gloomier and the form of the hunter gradually blended with the night.

An hour later, the full moon rolled above the forest, and the river glistened brightly in its rays. Silently the flat-boat glided onward, its skillful pilot ever maintaining its position as near the centre of the river as possible.

The cabin, we may remark in this place, was divided into two compartments of nearly the same size. The forward was the sleeping one for the females, and was only occupied by them during the night. The other was the general sitting-room in which all remained most of the day, and in which the men spent the night.

A dim light was burning, sending forth a heavy

oily smoke, which found vent through the trap-door above. The faces of all looked wan and ghastly in the sickly yellow light.

They, however, remained but a comparatively short time below. Their meal finished, and they all went above,—the two Smiths, including also the wife, took their position at the bow of the boat, when they could look, fight if necessary and—keep still.

It was far from being the case at the bow, where were congregated McGowan, Napyank, young Smith, and Mrs. McGowan and her daughter. They were disposed to enjoy the scene as much as possible.

“If we could feel safe,” remarked Ruth, “how happy we could be. This scenery is splendid.”

“Yes,” replied the father, who was somewhat impressed by the majestic solemnity of his surroundings.

“It’s enough to make any man feel solemn.”

“This would be a grand old night to go on a serenade,” said young Smith, glancing at Ruth.

“I’ve no doubt there are several Indian residences in the vicinity,” said McGowan. “Suppose you sing a song in front of them. No doubt it will be appreciated.”

“I should like to sing the death-song of all of them.”

“How soon before we reach our home?” inquired Ruth McGowan of the hunter.

“We ought to be there to-morrow afternoon, if we suffer no interruption.”

“And this is the last night we are to spend upon the river?”

“I hope it is.”

“How rejoiced I am!” exclaimed Ruth with a glowing face.

“But,” said the hunter deeming it best to check her exuberance, “we haven’t reached that point yet.”

“Of course not, but we soon shall. How brightly the moon shines! It is almost as light as day.”

“It is not going to last,” said Napyank, “there are

clouds coming up in the sky, and it will not be long before we are in the darkness. Hello? Smith there has discovered something. What is it, Smith?"

"Look over the side of the boat," said the elder, making a desperate effort to break his reticence.

The hunter did so, and instantly detected the head of a man on the surface of the water, approaching the boat.

"I ought to have seen that," he said catching up his rifle. "There is a man swimming out to us. I say, you," he called, addressing the individual in the river. "What is it you want?"

The man puffing and blowing, continued rapidly to near the vessel, but made no reply. The hunter raised his rifle in a significant manner.

"Don't shoot," admonished McGowan, "one man can do no harm."

All were now crowding toward the gunwale, when Napyank requested them to keep back. A moment later, the form in the water had reached the flat-boat and now called out,

"Would yees have the onspakable kindness to lower a rope jist, and assist a gintleman on board?"

What a revulsion the sound of that voice created! The cheery brogue, of a humorous Irishman established a feeling of brotherhood on the moment.

"Teddy O'Donnell, as certain as I'm alive," exclaimed Napyank, as he assisted him on board.

The next moment a great, huge, strapping Irishman came floundering over the gunwale, like a prodigious porpoise that had just been hooked.

"The top of the morning to yees, barrin it is'nt morning but night," said he. "I graats yees with plisure."

"You are welcome, very welcome," said McGowan. "We are glad of a friend at any time. But you are very wet. Would it not be best to change your clothes?"

"Yas," drawled the Irishman, with irresistible

comicality, "there's only a slight objection to these same. This is the ownly suit I possesses, and therefore if I should attimpt to change it, me costume would be rather too airy for the obsarvers."

There was such a dry humor in all that the man uttered, that he soon had his listeners on a broad grin. The Irishman seemed totally unimpressed by the gloom and threatening stillness of the woods, and could joke even over his own descomfiture. The manner of his meeting with the hunter showed that both were friends, though none of the others recollected ever having seen him. Five minutes after his advent upon the deck, all were as well acquainted, as if they had known each other for a lifetime

"I did not exactly mean that," said McGowan, alluding to his last remark. "We are well provided with clothes, and if you will go below with Smith here, he will see that you are speedily adjusted in a comfortable rig."

"Your obedient sarvant" said Teddy, tipping his hat to young Smith, with all the gallantry of a cavalier, and descending with him into the cabin."

"He is what I call an original genius," remarked McGowan to Napyank, when Teddy had departed.

"He is a great fellow Teddy. He's one of the best hearted Irishman I ever met."

"I noticed you were acquainted."

"I've known him for a dozen years; he's sort of a scout for the frontier posts. I can't say I'm really glad he has joined us."

"Why not?" inquired McGowan in astonishment.

"'Cause he's always been considered the onluekiest dog in these parts. I never knowed him to go on a scent but what he had got into some confounded scrape."

"I should consider him very fortunate then, that he has escaped with his life, and lives to tell the tale," said Ruth.

"Perhaps he is," answered the hunter, who did not

wish to occasion any alarm. "I didn't think of that way of looking at it."

"Why does he continue such a life?"

"It's just his delight. That feller is covered with cuts and scars, and hacks he's got from the Injins. I couldn't tell how many times he's had his skull cracked."

"What brings him here?"

"He's had the redskins after him, and has had to take to the river to get away from 'em. If it hadn't been for the flat-boat, it would've been all over with him."

"He must be a brave man indeed."

"He's all that; he'd rather fight any time than eat. If he can work it to get into a scrimmage with the dogs, before we reach the settlement he will do so."

"If he is so pugnacious as that, I trust you will be able to restrain him. He has no right to run us into any danger to justify his predilections."

He won't do that; it will be himself only that he will try to get into trouble. Last summer, I went out in Kentucky with him. Afore we knowed it, we got a whole batch after us, and had to take to the river to give 'em the slip. We managed to throw 'em off the scent, and being pretty well worn out, hide under some bushes. We hadn't been there long, when another party came along and squatted down right by us. They staid awhile and was going off without disturbing us, when this Teddy jumped up with a yell, and went right among 'em, using his gun for a shillalah, and whacking 'em over the head."

"Of course, I had to pitch in with him, and it was about the worst scrimmage of my life. We gave some of the tallest kind of yelling, and I s'pose it must have been that scart 'em, for it want long before they left."

"It is strange he escapes with his life."

"Some of these days he will go under. His head is so hard that it seems to me he never can get it hurt, and, as that's where he does generally get basted, that must be the reason he stands it so well."

At this juncture, the subject of their remarks reappeared on deck, in such grotesque attire, that laughter was involuntary upon the part of all who saw him. His pantaloons were too baggy and far too large, his coat reached to his heels, and the sleeves were rolled up to his elbows. As for the shirt there can be nothing said regarding that, as there was none at all; for shoes, he retained his mocassins.

"That's what I tarm a butiful shtyle of avening dress; also a choice one, bein' there is no other to take your choice from."

"You are comfortable at least," remarked McGowan.

"I faals so jist at praisent. I haven't got exactly, sot to 'em but I s'pose I will pretty soon."

"You remain with us, I hope."

"I hopes the same; I s'pose you're bound for the settlement down the river?"

"Yes."

"I have an appointment to meet Simon Kenton there, so if yees doesn't object to my company, I'll jine yees."

"With all pleasure. The sight of a white face in these parts does us good."

Teddy laughed heartily.

"It's meseelf that deesn't lay claim to being the same. When I had to dodge me head to give the redskins the slip, it was the first washing I had given my face since this saison set in—that's the fact the first time since this saison set in."

Ruth McGowan's horror was unbounded, until her lover reminded her that this was the first day of summer, so that Teddy perhaps was as tidy as the generality of humanity.

"You came on us rather unexpectedly," said young Smith.

"Yees did the same wid meself if you'll allow me to make the observation."

"Another scrimmage?" inquired Napyank.

"Nothing hardly worth of mentioning. I under-

took to crack the heads of a half-dozen I found slaping, and would have done it, if it hadn't been for a thrifling thing."

"And what was that?"

"They cracked mi own widout given me the chance to return the compliment."

"You then took to the water?"

"I did not. I tuk to the woods, with the intention of coming back and given 'em a partin' crack, when I coteched sight of this old barn floating down shtream."

"Why didn't you hail us?" inquired the hunter, with a peculiarly significant intonation.

"Arrah git out! din't I try that last shpring, and you holding the guiding oar in your hand all these times, and knowin' it was meself, and you bawling it was a decoy so as to keep me thramping till I had to shwim out to yees and haul meself on boord? Git out wid yer nonsense."

Napyank laughed as if the recollection afforded him great pleasure.

"Yees are an unfaaling creature," continued Teddy. "Yees have sarved me more that one ongintlemanly thrick."

"Why, what now, Teddy?"

"Yees reminds when ye wid not lit me tackle the ridskins out in Kaintuck."

"But they were a dozen, and we were only two."

"What the odds! We had not cracked a head for a waak, and there was emminent danger of me losing the scientific touch of the business."

"It's plain to see when you are in your element," commented McGowan, and then addressing the ladies,

"Come, it is time you went below; it is getting quite late."

The females took this palpable hint; and bidding their friends good night descended into the cabin. Teddy tipped his hat and seraped his foot, with all the politeness at his command and then turned to his new made friends.

CHAPTER III.

TEDDY O'DONNELL AND HIS LOVE ADVENTURE.
STARTLING CATASTROPHE.

For the last hour the sky had been rapidly becoming overcast, and a thick fog was gathering over the river, which beyond doubt would enclose our friends in impenetrable gloom. There was not much probability of a storm, but it was certain regarding the obscuration of the moon and the approaching darkness.

Napyank, on the whole, was inclined to regret this. While it gave them a greater chance of being discovered by their vigilant enemies along shore, as they could proceed absolutely without noise, it still was emphatically venturing in the dark. Whether they were drifting in toward shore could not be known, until too late. Beside this the hunter called to mind that there was a large island near the center of the river which could be at no great distance from them, and it was his wish to avoid running upon this. As all were opposed to lying to for the night, the plan was not broached.

The settling gloom around them finally attracted the notice of young Smith who remarked,

"It's getting dark as sure as we live."

"I observe too, that a heavy mist is settling over the river," added McGowan.

"In an hour you won't be able to see tother end the boat," replied Napyank. "Smith there will have all he can do to manage to spy out the Injuns."

"Do you think they will trouble us?"

"Not unless we run right into 'em."

"And how can we do that?"

"We can't very well unless we get into a powerful big island that is somewhere in these parts."

"I am certain we ought to be able to steer clear of that."

"If we can only see it—there's the trouble."

"Joe," said McGowan, after a few minutes silence, "Why not run into the shore and tie up for the night?"

The hunter shook his head.

"I wouldn't do; I seen that tried once, on jest such a night as this. Them reds, it seems to me, can smell a flat-boat a mile off. They'd swarm down on us like a lot of flies."

For some time Teddy had stood silent and thoughtful. His arms were folded, and he was looking out upon the still surface of the river.

"What is it you're thinking about?" inquired Napyank.

"I feels sorryful, by the same token," he replied in a sad tone, heaving a tremendous sigh.

"What is the cause?"

"I was jest thinkin of a wee bit of a girril that I had left at me home in ould Ireland—God bless her."

"An affection of the heart, eh?"

"It bees; and it's sthrange—there's a very sthrange sarchumstance connected wid the same girril."

"What is it?"

"It's now good ten years since I last saw her, and I've niver once brought her to mind tili this same minute."

"You certainly could not have thought much of her."

"I sartinly did; I've just thought of what it was that brought her to mind. It's this ould coat."

"And how should that do it?" inquired young

Smith, who seemed about the only one who felt any interest in the matter.

"The last time I saw her she had on jist the same article; Ah! but she looked swate in it. She was diggin' pataties at the time. It was the same that had the sphlendid fut for yees—none ov yer little cramped up nothin'—but a reg'lar stunner—as flat as a pancake. Ah! she was a girril."

Another great sigh, showed how deep the Irishman's feelings were regarding his almost forgotton love.

"And her ringlets—ah! if ye could but have seen them. They war'nt twisted up like a nagur's, but long and graceful with jist the slightest twist to 'em, and as red as the fire in me own pipe."

"It is strange you left her Teddy, if you held her in such high estimation."

"I didnt' hould her, she staid there widout the howlding. Ah! she was the gal for me. I niver called on her but what we had a fight. We both used a shillalah, and it was there I got the scientific touch of that beautiful instrument. We always had black eyes after we left each other. It was that what gave me the high respect for her, that I shall entertain up to the day of my death."

"But you haven't told me why it is you left her society?"

"That was alas strange, but when I state the circumstances, you will see how great should be my respect toward the young lady."

"I'm anxious to hear it, I'm sure."

"Wal!" proceeded Teddy, with another great sigh. "I called an her one evening in the spring time of the year, when the flowers were in bloom and the petaties were getting ready to be, I proposed that we should have another set to, when we went at it right away. Begorrah but Bridget got the best of me that time. She fetched me a whack over the eye afore I knowed anything about what was comin' and laid me out

shtiff. When I came to she was still lambasting me, and she kept at it, till I had to lave the counthry to get away from her. Ah! me own swate jewil, if I but had you here this minute," sighed Teddy, after he had concluded the narrative.

"What was the name of your love?" inquired Smith.

Bridget Moghohlmeoghan."

By this time the gloom had become so heavy, that the heads of the two Smiths could scarcely be discovered, as they stood at the prow silent and faithful to their duties. The obscurity became greater and greater until the hunter's prediction was literally fulfilled. The prow of the boat was a dim, vague, shadowy representation, whose outlines could not have been defined, had not one known its identity. The shores had long since faded from vision, that our friends were drifting helplessly forward—knowing that if danger lay in their path there was no possibility of discovering it, until they were fairly upon it.

Under these circumstances, the hunter considered the propriety of tying to the shore until morning. If they could hit upon some retired spot, where there was little probability of attracting attention, they ran far less risk of being molested, than by continuing onward in this aimless manner.

"What I'm the most afeard of," said Napyank, is that they'll hear the creaking of the oars. The night is very still, and such a racket as they would make, a noise you could hear a half-mile."

"Be the same token don't let 'em make any noise," was the brilliant suggestion of Teddy O'Donnell.

"Easier said than done. Then the splashing wo'd make; that would be just as bad."

"Can't we work into shore gradually?" inquired or rather suggested McGowan. "We can dip the oars very quietly and work them with great care."

"I can't hardly think what to do," said the hunter

in some perplexity. "I think, howsumever, we'll go ahead for the present."

"But the island."

"That is the only thing that troubles me."

"Most likely the current will drift us by that."

"I hope it will, but it is powerful onsartin."

After some further consideration, it was concluded that it would be best to glide onward as they were doing at present, keeping in the meantime, as close a watch as was possible under the circumstances for the island that they all had so much reason to fear.

"The poorest part of this boat is the bottom," remarked McGowan.

"We couldn't get the proper timber, I remember we put in or two pieces that I am anxious about."

"That makes it worse now I thought," replied Napyank, betraying his anxiety in his words. "By gr-a-c-i-o-us! if we should run into the island, it would be sure to punch a hole in the bottom."

"And what if we did, couldn't we fill the same hool up agin?" asked Teddy.

"Hardly——"

"Hello! what's the matter with Smith?" interrupted the hunter.

"Here's the island!" exclaimed the old man.

"Use your oar!" called Napyank, dipping his own deep in the water and swaying it with all the force at his command.

And here a most unfortunate mistake occurred. The two Smiths worked in one direction, and the hunter, assisted by his friends, in the opposite. Before the error was discovered, the flat-boat swung around, and the next moment went broad-side upon the island.

"By heavens! we have struck!" exclaimed McGowan.

"Yes; and the boat is sinking," added the hunter. "Git the women out and be powerful quick about it!"

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ISLAND.—ENVIRONED BY PERIL.—SAD FOREBODINGS.—YOUNG SMITH'S DESPERATE ADVENTURE.

It was an appalling fact that the flat-boat had staved in its bottom and was rapidly filling with water. With one bound McGowan sprang to the cabin and aroused the inmates. Before they were fairly arisen, he discovered they were in no immediate danger. The bow of the boat rested on the sand, while the stern had swung around and was settling some five or six feet—a depth sufficient to carry the rear entirely below the surface.

It was the work of a few moments, to land Mrs. Smith, McGowan and Ruth upon the island. Napyank leaped down, and assisted them to the ground so successfully that all landed dry shod. Their valuables (which being few were indeed valuable) were speedily cast out and in fifteen minutes after the flat-boat struck, its entire contents, both animate and inanimate were upon the island.

“This is a little too bad,” said McGowan gloomily. “Those few rotten planks have played the mischief. The boat can never do us any more good.”

“Can't yees repair it, as the cobbler axed the doethor after he'd cracked his wife's skull.”

“Repair it? No, we should never have started with such an old hulk as that.”

“Perhaps now we're near enough to the mainland to be able to wade over,” suggested young Smith.

"Can't do it," replied the hunter shaking his head
"We'll have to make a raft and paddle over."

"With the old hulk bulging up there, it will be sure to be seen in the morning," said McGowan gloomily surveying the dark mass of useless lumber.
"Can't we shove it further back into the water, and let it sink out of sight?"

"We will try it."

"The six men waded into the stream and pressed their shoulders against the boat. Teddy's first essay was accompanied by a slipping of the foot which left him fall flat upon his face, where he floundered some time before he regained his upright position.

The united effort of the half-dozen men failed to budge the craft. It was as heavy and had settled so firmly that it was absolutely immovable unless by more strength than our friends had at their command. As Teddy remarked, the "owld critter had sat down to stay."

"We can't do anything with it," said McGowan, "and that being the case, what shall we do with ourselves?"

"Get off the island as soon as possible," replied young Smith.

"It is now so dark that I don't suppose anything can be done before morning," added McGowan.

"Take things easy," said Teddy. "Don't you see we're safer here than we was on that owld mud-scar. We could go to the bottom of river wid that any time; but here we can sleep as sound as snorting tapple."

"We may as well make ourselves comfortable like till morning," added Napyank. "Fix up the women-folks, and we can take eare of ourselves."

The island was found to be larger than they had at first supposed. It was more than an eighth of a mile from one end to the other, thickly wooded, and covered with rank grass and a dense undergrowth. It was oval shaped, and very regular in its outline, being rather more than two hundred feet broad in its widest part.

"What a magnificent summer sate this would make for a gentleman like meself," said Teddy, as the two stood in the shadow of a tree, on the lower part of the island.

"So it would," replied young Smith. "I shouldn't be surprised if it was used for that purpose before many years."

"Be the same token it's the summer sate of a party of travellers at this very minute, and it's probable we'll make quite a stay upon it."

"I hope there ain't any Indians looking at us," said McGowan with a shudder, as he glanced toward the shore of the dark and bloody ground. "I am afraid for the women."

"So does I,—— but——"

"Look there!" exclaimed McGowan fairly springing off his feet.

"What? where? I don't see anything."

"Here! here! this way!" said he pulling his companion around. "'Taint there—— *it's on the island*, right below us! look, can't you see it?"

"I saas the traas and the fog and that's all."

"It disappeared the very minute you looked. There it is again! Now it's gone! I wonder what makes it act that way."

"What is it, man, you're making such a noise about?"

"Why sir," said McGowan solemnly, "as sure as you and I stand here, I seen a light moving about on the island."

This being the case, McGowan and the two silent Smiths at once returned to the women, while the others passed down the shore of the island. They had gone a considerable distance in silence when young Smith suddenly caught the arm of the Irishman like a vice, and without a word pointed meaningly toward the trees where the alarming manifestations had first been seen. There was no mistaking this time. Napyank saw a bright light shining steadily

through the trees—so brightly and steadily that he was certain it could not be far from them. Moving back more closely under the shadow of their own tree, he whispered,

“We must find out what the dogs are doing.”

“I say, there ought to be only one or two of us,” said young Smith. “Suppose you let me and Joe go?”

“I can, to be sure, but then what use would it be?” replied the hunter. “I can go, while you stay here and keep watch.”

“And where’s the need of our keeping watch here?”

“You know some of the Injuns might slip onto the island while I’m gone, and it wouldn’t take them long to play the mischief with the women folks.”

“Do yees do the same duty then, for I’m needed elsewhere, and here’s good luck to yees,” said Teddy.

“But——”

But the Irishman and hunter disappeared.

“I hope they won’t get us into trouble,” said young Smith when he found he was alone. “I think the Irishman ought to know by this time that we do not relish his madcap scheme. I would never have come into such a country as this if we were to be ruined by him. I don’t know about that, either,” he added, after a moment’s thought; “I *did* hate to see Ruth go, and I don’t believe I could have contented myself at home. The dear sweet girl! What a pity she should be subjected to this danger and suffering and that, too, when we are so near our journey’s end. To-morrow we should have been able to reach our destination if it had not been for this bad accident. We have already enough,” he added, after a moment’s pause, “to let us know we are in danger this very minute. I understood Joe to say that this part of the river was the most dangerous of any that he knew, so, I can’t see how we are going to get safely through. God watch over the poor beings that are dependent under thee, upon us for safety.”

"I hope the Irishman has sense enough to keep his eyes about him," he continued. "That Joe was right in saying the crisis of the danger would be reached to-night. We're in the crisis I believe in this very minute."

Young Smith was standing in the attitude of acute attention, every faculty absorbed in the one of listening. When his whole being was thrilled by the explosion of two rifles, followed by a succession of horrid yells that made his very blood curdle! It needed no thought to tell him that these came from the throats of the savages, and that the worst that he had feared, had taken place.

His first impression was, that the two scouts had been discovered, and fired upon, and that his own life was in peril. But, upon second thought, he knew by the direction of the sounds, that they proceeded from the lower part of the island, and that it was the friends whom he had left behind, that were attacked. Believing then, that the scouts were safe, for the present, he was debating whether to remain where he was, until rejoined by them or to hasten at once to his friends.

He had not yet come to a conclusion, when a slight grating noise upon the shingle of the beach caught his ear, and turning his head, he saw that a canoe had just landed within a few feet of him, and, at that very moment, two painted savages were in the act of stepping ashore. With his heart in his throat, he moved around to the opposite side of the tree, and watched the motions of these Indians.

They acted very deliberately, seeming to take no notice of the tumult, which a moment before, had broken the profound stillness of stream and wood.

They first pulled the canoe high upon the land, each took a rifle from it, and then strode directly toward the tree which concealed the apprehensive man. As they passed so near that he could have touched them with his hand, he absolutely believed they would hear his heart beat. But such a thing has never occurred, no matter how wildly that organ has throbbled, and

then the Indians who would have detected the faintest sound, passed on, and disappeared in the wood of the island, without once suspecting how nigh they had been to one of the very persons for whom they were searching.

They had hardly gone when Smith stole cautiously forth to view, and looking carefully about him detected Teddy stealing up to where he had concealed himself.

"What did you see?" he inquired of the Irishman.

The latter looked carefully about him a moment before he made a reply.

"May our howly mother presarve us, but the island is full of the haythen."

"What is that light we saw?"

"It was the camp fire of a whole pack of the divils. But, we're in a bad fix."

"Didn't you hear rifles? They're in a worse fix," said young Smith, in an under tone. "What's to be done?"

"That's what I don't know. We must get back if we can, and see what the outlandish divils have been at. *Yapnank* has left me out there and maybe he's gone back already."

They both started toward the upper end of the island, the Irishman not disdaining to use the utmost caution. Every few yards he paused and listened for the slightest warning of danger, and, so for Smith, he expected in his excited condition each moment to see a whole horde of screeching savages rush out from the trees.

Although naturally brave he had not as yet acquired that familiarity with this species of danger to make him cool and collected.

The whole distance was passed without any further evidence of the presence of the enemy. Upon reaching their friends they found them vigilant and cool. They stated that a number of canoes had come from

the mainland, and after reconnoitering the flat-boat had discharged a couple of rifles and then departed.

No one had been injured by the shot although they came dangerously near the older Smith. Napyank had not yet returned, and the young man could see on the faces of those around him the impress of the most depressed and saddened forebodings. Some of them, especially his own cherished Ruth, was endeavoring to keep up a brave spirit, but none of them could conceal the discouragement they really felt in their hearts. Young Smith conversed with them in an undertone for a few moments and then withdrew to a retired spot.

Scarcely knowing what he did he walked slowly out from the protection which the tree afforded him, and stood on the moonlit beach. He placed the stock of his rifle on the hard shingle, and leaning upon it gave way to the most saddened meditations.

Just before him, as motionless as a rock, rested the hulk of the sunken flat-boat. The soft ripple of the Ohio against the sand at his feet, that deep hollow murmur of the great wilderness were the only sounds that reached his ear; and these from their monotonous continuity, seemed silence itself. The moon was nearly over head, shining in that peculiar manner, that the river seemed to reflect more light than it received. A few straggling clouds as white as snow-drifts, now and then floated before the moon, and huge grotesque shadows glided over the island, across the stream and into the wood like phantoms. On either side the frowning forest rose like a wall of blackness, and seemed to close the whites in an impregnable prison.

It was no wonder that the young adventurer felt gloomy and despairing. It could not be otherwise than this, while within a dozen miles of the settlement, and in the most dangerous portion of the river, an accident should place himself and his friends in imminent peril, and make the escape of all of them in

it seemed to him, an utter impossibility. He was in the midst of these gloomy forebodings, when the sound of a light foot-step startled him, and looking around, he turned to greet his friends.

"Well, what have you discovered?" he added.
"Are we alone in the island?"

To his surprise he received no reply.

"What are our prospects of getting over to the mainland?"

As quick as lightning young Smith's rifle was at his shoulder, and one of the approaching Indians was shot through the breast. With a wild yell he sprang high in the air and, fell dead upon the sand. At the same moment the white man saw something flash and heard a rushing sound close to his face, followed by the splash of the tomahawk in the water behind him. Clubbing his rifle he stood on the defensive, when he noted that neither of the savages possessed a rifle, and conscious that he was more than a match for the surviving one he made a rush at him.

The Indian turned to flee, and Smith had hardly started in pursuit, when the report of a second rifle was heard among the trees, followed by a series of whoops and yells as if a legion of demons had suddenly been loosed. With a rare presence of mind the young man comprehended his critical situation in an instant. The wood was swarming with Indians. If he went a rod further his own destruction would be inevitable.

Wheeling around with such celerity that his momentum carried him nearly off his feet, he flung his gun from him and ran for his life to the flat-boat. Stepping one foot into the water he made a tremendous bound and alighted upon the gunwale, the same as a bird would have done; and then tearing his hat from his head, he concentrated all his energies in the one effort and sprang full a dozen feet out into the river.

The instant he came to the surface he gasped for breath and dove again, swimming while beneath the

surface, as far out toward the Kentucky shore as possible, repeating the manœuvre several times, until believing that he was at a safe distance from the island, he swam sideways and anxiously surveyed it.

So prompt and rapid had been his movements, that he had not been seen, and his own escape, if he chose to improve the opportunity given him, was at least insured; but he would rather have been smitten by instant annihilation rather than desert those he had left behind him. The thought had never once entered his head.

He continued off the island until the current had carried him nearly half way to the lower end when he cautiously approached the shore. As he walked in under the shadow, several forms followed him like phantoms, while as many more closed around him from the wood. He has taken but a few steps, when he was startled by hearing a suppressed exclamation. His apprehension told him at once that it was the voice of an Indian, and he was moving away from the point from which it came, when he caught a glimpse of the shadow-like figures around him, and saw that the most dangerous crisis of his life was upon him.

The Indians had not yet surrounded him, and conscious that all depended upon a quick and energetic decision, he made a dash toward the river. The dense undergrowth at this portion of the island impeded the movements of both pursuer and pursued; but the activity of the white man was superior, and he was first at the beach, when making another terrific leap, he bounded out into deep water and dove beneath the surface.

While beneath the water, young Smith heard distinctly the dull report of the rifles, and the skipping of the bullets as they glanced over the water. Being a skillful swimmer, he turned upon his back, and as he was borne along upward, he allowed only his mouth and nose to be exposed, when inhaling a sufficient

quantity of air, he again dove, and repeated precisely the same manœuvre that we have described before.

Finally believing he was once more safe, he allowed his head and shoulders to come to view, and looked back toward the island. To his dismay, an Indian canoe was within a dozen feet of him ! Its occupants descried him at the same moment that he discovered them, and now commenced a most exciting race of life and death !

One minute would have decided the contest in the middle of the river, but fortunately indeed, Smith's efforts had brought him within a few rods of the shore. Fearful of being fired upon he repeated his stratagem of diving, and when he came to the surface, struggled frantically to gain the shore, with the canoe darting forward like a shadow. As soon as he could gain a foothold, he tore through the foaming water and dashed into the woods, while the canoe was scarcely twice its length behind him.

It was now only by the most skillful running, dodging and doubling, that he succeeded in freeing himself from his agile pursuers. He had gone fully half a mile in the forest before this was accomplished, but he found himself at length entirely alone, and panting and exhausted he seated himself upon the ground, to decide upon the next course to pursue.

He could not think of leaving the island when he had every reason to believe that all he held dear on earth was upon it. She whom he cherished above all others on earth was there and in imminent danger. And although there were more skillful arms than his left behind, still he knew his presence and aid were sorely needed. He resolved to return.

With this determination he arose and retraced his steps. It is needless to say he made his way as silently, stealthily and cautiously as he was able to do, starting at every rustling wind and falling leaf. Upon reaching the shore of the river, he found that he was above the island, and wading it, swam out toward it.

He wished if possible, to recover his rifle and gain a glimpse of the band of Indians who had so well nigh slain him, and who beyond all question were plotting further hurt.

Steelying himself he allowed the current to carry him downward, and when several rods distant, checked his motion, and took a survey of the flat-boat and its surroundings.

He saw his rifle lying upon the beach, its ornamented stock and barrel shining in the moonlight. After carefully surveying every portion of the island that came under his observation, he detected no sign of danger, and was about to let himself float forward again, when the lifted head of a savage rose above the gunwale, and remained in view for fully a minute.

As the moon shone fully upon the Indian he distinguished his features plainly. He concluded at once that there were several others on the flat-boat, and all waiting for his return. The savage gazed carefully about him, and deservyng nothing, his head disappeared from view.

"Ah, my fine fellow," thought Smith, as he noiselessly swam toward the Ohio shore. "You may watch there quite a while before you can catch me in any of your traps."

He now floated slowly down the river, keeping about midway between the island and the Ohio bank, and so far as possible examined the former as he passed the bank. Reaching its extremity he passed around it and commenced ascending the opposite side, so as to complete his reconnoissance. This was an extremely difficult task, and none but the most powerful swimmer could have accomplished it. But he succeeded, and finally "anchored" for a few moments, abreast of the flat-boat, while he took another observation. He saw nothing more of the Indians, although he believed they were still upon it.

He was convinced that the majority of the Indians were still upon the island, and after floating somewhat

lower, he landed at precisely the same spot where he came so near being captured before. Feeling confident that he had not been seen, he unhesitatingly came ashore and passed beneath the shadow of the trees.

Upon coming from the water, his limbs were so heavy and felt so exhausted that he threw himself upon the ground to gain a few moments' rest. Despite the exciting scenes in which he had just participated, and the terrible ordeal through which he had passed, he fell asleep almost immediately.

It was in the midst of a fearful dream he was awakened by a grasp upon his arm. Believing resistance to be useless, he lay motionless, waiting for the command of his captors.

"Begorrah but bees you goin' for to sleep a month whin your friends are in the greatest anxiety on yer account, barrin the little blue-eyed maiden that is the most anxious of 'em all.

A moment later Napyank came from the trees and congratulated our hero on his escape. He announced that their friends were withdrawn to a secluded spot on the island, where they were to remain for the present, if undisturbed by the Indians.

CHAPTER V.

SAD NEWS—RECOVERY OF A RIFLE.

The dull gray light that now began to overspread the sky, gave token of the coming day, and these whites withdrew further into the grove for consultation.

"This is a bad business, remarked young Smith, after he had exchanged experiences with his friends. The fiends have outwitted us at last. God knows what will become of the others.

As delicately as possible it was announced to young Smith that his father had been slain. He was overcome for a few moments, but by a great effort, he choked down his emotion. Finally he asked the particulars, and said,

Let us hunt him up and give him a decent burial. Poor mother. We can find some means to scoop out a grave for him.

The three moved away to the clearing, but, upon reaching it, nothing of the body was to be seen. The Indians had carried it from the island.

"Perhaps it is as well," said the hunter. "He is beyond all pain, and suffering, and the disposal of his body can make no difference to him, although I would that we could have done our duty to him."

At this period the stricken man received the intelligence that at the same time that his parent was slain, Ruth McGowan was captured. He looked up with an expression of literal horror.

For a few moments nothing was said, and then the hunter, anxious to relieve the suspense, clamped his rifle down upon the ground as he came to a halt, and folding his arm over it, "Here we are, and the question before this assembly is, how we're going to get away. What do you propose to do Teddy?"

"I advise that we ate breakfast."

"The only objection to that," replied Napyank, "is that we have nothing to eat; but we must first go over the island again and learn if there are any of the demons left. If not we must get on their tracks, for as true as the heaven is above me, I'll never go to that settlement without Rnth."

"I am certain—that is, as certain as I can be—that the last of the Indians left the island a half hour ago. We saw their canoes going off."

"It is best be certain. We will go to the lower end of the island, and proceed to the upper end, to learn whether any of the reds are left, and if——"

"And if—what then?"

"You will see," replied Napyank, shaking his head very significantly.

At the extremity of the island the three separated, as had been proposed, and commenced making their way back again.

In doing this, it was necessary to avoid exposing themselves, and from the great caution that was necessary, the work was an entirely difficult and tedious one.

It was not until full two hours had elapsed that three whites met on the spot that had been designated as their rendezvous.

Their search, or examination as it might be termed, proved that the savages had indeed left the island, not a sign of one having been discovered. They had probably done this under the belief that the whites had succeeded in reaching the mainland, so that the latter were convinced that if they kept themselves concealed during the day, they would not be disturb.

ed, and could easily get away when night came again. The ashes of their camp-fire had been discovered, discovered, and blood upon the leaves and other evidences of their recent visit.

"But, where's your rifle?" asked Joe, who noticed that young Smith had been unprovided with that weapon.

The latter looked through the trees.

"Yonder it lies this minute. Strange that they did not steal that also. I will go and recover it.

He paused ere he had passed out from among the trees, for the very fact that the rifle lay there undisturbed, sent a suspicious pang through him. It seemed probable that such an occurrence could be a mere accident. A true Indian, rarely, if ever, committed such an oversight. The rifle was magnificently mounted and would have been a prize to any one.

There was another matter, which in Smith's state of mind excited suspicion and apprehension. He believed the gun did not lie on the precise spot where he had thrown it. He recollected that he had flung it with such force that it must have gone very nearly to the edge of the beach, whereas it now lay either on the very spot that he had passed over, or a few feet on the opposite side.

This circumstance which at any other time, would have attracted no attention at all, caused our hero much uneasiness. He felt that it was by no means certain that every thing was right upon the island, although it had just been proven, that their enemies had left it. It looked to him as though a trap had been laid to ensnare him, and this rifle of his, lying but a few yards distant was the bait.

Feeling very well convinced that there was some design in the presence of the rifle, he set himself to work to discover the precise means by which it was intended to entrap him. There being no Indians on the island, of course he ran no risk of being taken prisoner, in case he ventured out to secure the wea-

pon The distance from this point to either shore was so slight, that it would have been the easiest matter in the world for a concealed savage to pick him off.

Ah! the flat-boat! Smith's heart leaped at the thought. Strange that it had not occurred to him before. There it lay just as it had during the night, save, perhaps, that it had sunk a few inches lower. It was upon that he had seen the heads of several Indians, and there, in all probability, they still lay in wait, watching for his reappearance.

What reason had the Indians to suppose that Smith would again return to the island. The best of reasons. He had shown to them a desire to do so, and as long as he believed that his friends were there, the savages well knew he would linger in the vicinity. Once upon the island he would not fail to recover his gun, provided he believed he incurred no additional danger in doing so.

That, then, was the solution of the question. Taking all matters into consideration, Smith came to the conclusion that it was their desire to take him prisoner, instead of shooting him, deeming most probably, the latter death far too comfortable a mode for him to use of getting out of the world. He knew enough of the bloodthirsty savages to understand what a terrible fate would be his, in case he fell into their hands. They would take a fearful vengeance, for the Indian he had killed in self-defence. Well, indeed had it been for the elder Smith, that he was so speedily slain. It brought him a quick death, instead of a lingering torture.

These reflections, which we recorded at some length occupied but a few seconds. He saw everything with a hunter's eye and with a shake of the head, stepped back a pace or two, and resumed his position beside the Irishman and hunter.

"What's the matter?" asked the latter.

"It won't do—it won't do."

“What won’t do? Do you mean to go out there and pick up your rifle?”

“Yes, that is what I mean.”

“What is to hinder?”

“I don’t like the looks of that flat-boat.”

“Whew! blew the hunter, surveying the object in question as though he had never seen it before.

“Why you don’t like it?”

“I am afraid there are Indians concealed upon the boat I saw them there last night.

And now arose a dispute in which all three of the whites engaged. The hunter, most certainly was the best qualified to judge, expressed it as his firm conviction, that half a dozen Indians at least were at that moment glaring out from the flat boat, and waiting for their reappearance. Teddy persistently maintained that there was but one savage upon the raft, and that he lay in the cabin sound asleep! He could give no satisfactory reasons to the others for this belief, but he appeared sincerely to believe it himself.

Like all excited debaters, the longer they argued, they more strenuously did each affirm his belief in what he first stated. How long the dispute would have lasted, it is impossible to tell, had not the Irishman proposed to decide it at once.

“Be jabbers, it’s meself that ses there’s not more nor one hythen upon the raft, and it’s meself that’ll prove it to yees.”

“How are you going to do it?” asked Smith.

“Why, like a gentleman, by walking out there and picking up the rifle for yees.”

“That would be folly upon your part. The weapon is not worth risking your life for.

“I doesn’t intend riskin’ me life for it.”

“Well, don’t go Teddy; there is no need of it. I will give up my side of the question and agree with you, if you will stay with us.”

“You will agree with me, will yees?” asked Teddy with a curious expression of his fine blue eyes.

"Yes, if that will satisfy you.

"It suits me to a tee. You agree with me then, when I say there isn't more nor one of the haythen within five miles. Begorra then, if that's what yee believes, what harrum can come to me in picking up yer gun for yees alone! so here goes.

The hunter placed his hand on the shoulder of the Irishman and interposed.

"Don't do it, Teddy; there is no need of it."

"There is every need in the world for the young gentleman to have his gun, and there is every need of my getting it for him, being as he's afraid to get it himself."

"But it is too dangerous—it is too dangerous. I wouldn't do it.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Teddy.

"Why, by what token have ye any reason to object, bein' that ye think there is but one of the dogs on the boat and he sound asleep."

"He might wake up and shoot at you. You might stub yonr toe."

The Irishman was getting impatient. He waved them off, and stooping down rolled up his pantaloons and put his cap on one side, so as to give himself a saucy dare-devil air. Then, without any weapon at all in his hand, and whistling "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning," he walked boldly out on the beach and picked up the rifle of Smith.

It would be difficult to portray the emotion of the two whites as they watched the reckless Irishman. They scarcely breathed as he walked away from them, and with painfully throbbing hearts they kept their eyes fixed upon his every movement. While in the act of stooping to pick up the piece, the hunter thought his ear caught a noise upon the flat-boat, and he turned his head away, not wishing to see the venturesome man shot down. But while his eyes were still closed, Teddy reappeared beside him, and with an exulting look handed his rifle to young Smith.

"What do yees think now?" he asked.

"I still believe there are savages concealed in that flat-boat; and they only refrained from shooting you, in the belief that an opportunity of taking you a prisoner would soon be given them.

"And as for me," said the hunter, "I am morally convinced that a half dozen rifles were ready cooked to blow your brains out; but they knowed you'd come right into their hands, so they can afford to wait."

"Be jabers I'll soon find out!"

"How?"

"I'm goin' on the owld flat-boat itself."

"If the two men had been earnest in the objections, to the venture he had just made, they were nearly frantic in their efforts to restrain him from this fool-hardy exposure.

CHAPTER VI.

A RECKLESS ADVENTURE.—CAPTURE OF TEDDY.—A VISIT TO THE FLAT-BOAT.—THOUGHTS OF RESCUE.

Teddy announced that he intended visiting the boat for the further purpose of “detecting the apparance of things generally.”

“You won’t do any such thing,” said Smith somewhat impatiently. “You have already made a fool of yourself several times.”

“Be the same token I, must then remain one, I suppose.”

“I object,” said the hunter, shaking his head, “it can’t do any good, and it *may* do a mighty sight of hurt.”

“And haow?”

“I will tell you. The redskins know that we three are bobbing round the island, and so long as they know that, they will give us a wide birth. They know that we’ve got some women with us, and a few more rifles too, but it’s we three that are keeping them away. Spose one of us gets tuk, what’ll hinder ’em longer?”

“‘Spouse one of ’em doesn’t get tuck.”

“He will then be killed.”

“But there are no Injins there.”

It is a fact, that a man may commence with an assertion of absolute falsehood and, conscious at the beginning that he is defending such, argue himself in time, into the belief that it is truth. Then it was that Teddy, as he stepped gaily out upon the beach, was greatly relieved of anxiety by his own persistency in

adhering to what he well knew was error. He was well nigh convinced of what he had scarcely a hope before, that there were no savages upon the flat-boat.

Teddy had walked two-thirds of the distance to the hulk, and was within a few feet of the water, when he paused. He had discovered a startling thing!

That which arrested the brave-hearted Irishman, was the sight of a tuft of an Indian's head, visible for one moment only just above the gunwale, when it dropped suddenly from view again.

Smith and Napyank, noticing his hesitation, called out in a whisper for him to return. This very call was the means of sending him forward again. He was resolved that they should never laugh at this adventure, and with rather a quickened step, he strode forward, and grasping the gunwale with one hand, he carried himself with one bound, over upon the deck.

He had had left his rifle behind, and was armed only with his knife. His two friends breathlessly watched him and listened. They saw his head and shoulders gradually lower as he walked undauntedly toward the stern of the boat, until the bow hid them from sight, and then all was still.

The silence lasted for perhaps, a full minute, and then was broken by a yell as startling and terrific as an explosion of thunder in the clear summer sky. Instantly a half dozen tufted heads was seen dodging hither and thither over the deck, all centering around one burly, bareheaded figure, that was struggling like a lion amid a score of enemies which had dogged him nigh to death.

While the two men gazed transfixed with horror, a powerful-limbed Indian shot up like a rocket in mid-air, and came down in the river. Ere he had struck, another went spinning after him, falling flat on his face in the water, with a concussion that cracked like a pistol. While they were swimming with all speed, back to the boat, a heavy fall was heard, a faint shuffling noise, and then all was still.

As the foremost Indian was in the act of pulling himself over the gunwale of the flat-boat, he let go with a horrid whoop, and fell back dead, shot through the brain by a bullet from the rifle of the hunter. The other attempted to swim behind the stern, but Smith shot him ere it could be accomplished.

There could be but one cause for the sudden cessation of the tumult upon the flat-boat. Teddy had either been overcome or slain. The silence that succeeded the fearful yell and struggle was equally painful to his two friends. They waited long and impatiently for it to be broken.

"It's all up with him," whispered Smith, as he primed his rifle. "I pity him, but our hands are clear of his blood."

"Too bad, too bad," muttered Joe, who had just loaded his rifle, "he was a good fellow, my dear Teddy was indeed. I am sorry that he has come to this bad end."

"We must look out for ourselves, now. The best thing we can do, is to get off this infernal island, which has been the scene of so much misfortune to us. I am afraid that if we remain much longer, you will take it into your head to perform some such feat, and I shall be left alone."

"No, indeed, I won't; there is no danger of that," replied Joe. "I've lived long enough to learn common sense I think."

"It is yet early in the forenoon, and I suppose we shall be compelled to remain here until night."

"Of course we shall! It won't do to start out in the river in open daylight. We'd be killed before we had gone a dozen yards."

"Hello! did you hear that?" exclaimed Smith, with a start.

Several whoops were heard upon the Kentucky shore, apparently in answer to those which had been uttered some minutes before, by the captors of Teddy. Peering through the trees, Smith, added,

"There is a party coming off in a canoe. Get ready for hot work."

"There don't seem to be any good chance to hide," remarked Joe, glancing around him, as though he cared little whether there was such place or not.

"No, we must stand our ground; they have just started."

The canoe which was approaching was a large Indian one, in which were seated some three or four Indians, all busily plying their paddles. They headed straight for the upper end of the island, while the whites stood each behind a tree, with cocked rifles, waiting until they were compelled to fire.

Just as the canoe seemed about to touch, it sheered off and ran alongside of the flat-boat, where it lay againt and parallel to it. The heads of four savages immediately appeared above, as though they were staggering under the weight of some heavy load. The next second, Teddy, bound hand and foot, was handed over and deposited in the bottom of the canoe. His friends could hear him muttering dire threats of vengeance, and daring his captors to loose him for a moment, all of which, it is needless to say, attracted no notice whatever from them.

The captive disposed of, the Indians followed, sinking the canoe to its very gunwales. They paddled away toward the shore, and in a few moments, disappeared from view.

Now, at least," said Smith, "the island and boat are free from the imps, and we can have a breathing spell. Let us go upon the old hulk."

"What in the world do you want to do that for?"

"It is the safest place."

"I should like to inquire how it is."

"In the first place, there is no one upon it, and in the second place, as its sides are bullet-proof, we can use it as a fort, and keep off any number of foe until dark, when we can get off ourselves."

The hunter smiled grimly as if the conceit of the

young man pleased him. Adding that it was time they paid their friends a visit, he consented to young Smith's proposition.

It was with some misgiving, slight enough, but still sufficient to occasion uneasiness, that the young man once more approached the flat-boat. When he reached the deck, he experienced an irresistible desire to explore every portion of it; not that he suspected the presence of any Indian, but that he could not feel positively assured, until he has done so. The result was, that it was found to be entirely destitute of any persons except themselves. The cabin was half full of water, and it was here that the Indians had concealed themselves while their victim was approaching.

This proceeding of the two men, in taking possession of the old craft, was the most prudent thing he could have done. Had the two remained upon the island, they both would have been captured or shot, and the destruction of the entire party completed; but, as one had remarked, they had gained a fort where they could keep ten times their number at bay.

To the infinite joy of both, Joe stumbled upon a loaf of bread, which had escaped the eyes of the Indians. He pounced upon it greedily, and to the two famished adventurers, it was a perfect godsend. This devoured, and their hunger appeased—for it was an old fashioned loaf—both felt hopeful again.

"If there were anything in the hulk," said Smith, "we might stand a regular siege, and bid defiance to the whole redskin nation."

"There ain't a single bit more," replied Joe, "except a few crumbs upon that shelf there."

"Gather them up, gather them up; they may do us good."

"I have gathered them up. I thought they'd git wasted, so I jest rolled my tongue about the cupboard, and finished 'em."

During this fragmentary conversation, Joe was

constantly glancing about the river to see that no foe approached them unaware. The sad experience of the last few hours, had educated young Smith wonderfully. All this time, the reader will have noticed, his actions were controlled simply by necessity; he had taken no step except such as had been compelled by a regard for his own personal safety. Now, that that was attended to, he had leisure to look further into the future, and to reflect upon some definite plan for the rescue of Ruth from the hands of the savages.

This was the great question, and it was this which troubled him sorely. He could not think of leaving the neighborhood while she was a prisoner; and yet he could see nothing at all, that he was able to accomplish against the formidable band of savages. Although he pitied Teddy from the bottom of his heart, it could not be suspected that under the present circumstances, he could do anything toward his rescue.

Somehow or other, the thought constantly recurred to the young man, that something important would result from the fact that the Irishman was a fellow-captive with her. He was bold to recklessness, quick-witted, and faithful, and more from the natural kindness of his disposition, than a desire to return the interest shown in his own welfare, would he do all in his power, to befriend the helpless captive.

There were two schemes that Smith and the hunter thought long and earnestly upon. The first was to leave the flat-boat as soon as the darkness would permit, and accompanied by all the remaining fugitives make all haste to the settlement, and rally a large party of the frontiersmen, who would be able to overcome the entire force of the Indians.

The main objection to the proceeding was, that it required too much time for its execution. Ere the party could be raised the savages would have penetrated so far into the labyrinths of the wilderness as to make pursuit hopeless. If they chose they would

have abundant time to reach one of their towns, where it would require an army to dislodge them.

The other plan and the one which the ardent adventurer most favored, was, to attempt to regain her by stratagem—to cross over to the mainland, and to hang constantly in the vicinity of the savages, keeping a watch upon their movements, and trusting to his own quick perception and promptness of action, when the all-important occasion arrived.

The more he reflected, the more he was pleased with this project, and he finally imparted it a final resolution to his friend.

“It’s running a great risk,” replied the latter, scratching his head; “but I don’t see any other way of getting the gal; I’m with you in whatever you want to do. You’re considerable green I allow, but you’ve larned a powerful lot in the last day or two, and I think could manage it. But jist now I’m right hungry.”

“We will find means to obtain that when we once get into the woods. For the present we must bear our hunger patiently, and thank God we’re not dependant upon the Indians for food.”

“I should like to inquire what time you think it is?”

“It must be considerably advanced in the afternoon,” replied Smith, looking up at the sky. “The weather still remains clear, and there is no evidence of an approaching storm. I am glad that there will be no moon to-night. What we want is darkness—darkness.”

The afternoon gradually wore away, the sun went down, and evening once more settled upon wood and river. The same silence as profound as the tomb, held reign, and cautiously and silently the two whites let themselves down from the flat-boat, and made their preparations to leave the island, which had been the scene of such woe and suffering to their little party.

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH AND CAPTURE—THE COMPANIONS IN CAPTIVITY.

The reader will recollect, that a few hours after the flat-boat had grounded, and when the moon had risen Napyank, Teddy and young Smith set out to explore the island. McGowan and his family and the remaining Smiths staid behind. The former had left the trees, and the two latter were engaged in an affectionate earnest conversation, when some five or six indians appeared beside them. Before Ruth could recover her self-possession, one of them raised his piece within a dozen feet of the older Smith, and discharged it full at him, while several of the others sprang forward and grasped her.

Smith was severely wounded and blinded by pain; he sprang up with supernatural strength, and made off at the top of his speed through the wood. He was pursued to the edge of the clearing, when he was despatched with alarming celerity.

The savages who held the daughter prisoner, waited but a few seconds when they embarked in their canoe, and crossed to the mainland. A portion however remained upon the island, and we have recorded young Smith's adventures with them,

The Indians fully conscious that the whites were alarmed for their own safety, despaired of capturing them upon the island by stratagem, and were on the point of making a bold attack upon them, when eight stole out on the flat-boat, and concealed themselves

upon it, in the belief that the whites would visit it by the succeeding day, at least, when they would fall an easy prey to them.

We have shown how this stratagem partially succeeded. The head which Teddy desecrated prepared him for danger, and he went over the side of the flat-boat, in the full expectation of a "free fight." He was somewhat surprised on reaching the deck to see nothing of his enemies; but rightly conjecturing that they were concealed in the cabin, he passed it with the same impudent, swaggering air that he had left the island. He was even whistling "St. Patrick's Day" louder than ever.

Right abreast of the cabin door, a powerful half-naked Indian sprang up and made at him. The Irishman caught a glimpse of several other tufted heads, and springing like a panther upon the one in question, he lifted him from his feet, and by sheer animal strength flung him over the gunwale into the water. By this time a second Indian was beside him, and as quick as lightning he was served in the same manner.

The bronzed heads were now coming up out of the cabin rather too rapidly for the excited Irishman. Nevertheless it is by no means improbable, that at the disadvantage which he had his enemies, he would have successfully resisted them all, had not an accident turned the scales against him.

It has been stated that Teddy had no weapon but his knife, and in the melee he had not once thought of it, fighting, Irishman-like with his naked fists. The third face that appeared above the deck received a tremendous blow square on the nose, that completely mashed it; and another terrific right-hander gave the fourth savage a glimpse of more stars than are generally visible, and sent him as limp as a rag, back among his fellows.

The fight now culminated in the most glorious fun

that the Irishman could have desired. He was striking out right and left his stunning blows, when, concentrating all his strength in his right arm, he dashed his fist at the savage who stood the tallest, intending to lay him insensible, when the agile foe dodged him, and carried forward by the momentum of his own blow, the Irishman went headlong right among the redskins, where he was, pounced upon, and bound in a twinkling.

"Treat me gently," he exclaimed "ye can't say but what I did ye; and don't come any of your tricks over me."

The undaunted bravery and remarkable skill exhibited by the Irishman, could but excite admiration in his captors; and actuated by that chivalrous feeling existing in the breast of every brave-hearted being, whether he be savage or civilized, they forbore heaping any insult upon him, or offering him any indignity.

Some time after, the canoe came alongside, and he was handed over and deposited in it.

"Handle me with care," remarked Teddy, "for ye can't say that I didn't handle ye in that manner. If ye don't believe it look at them chaps' noses there! Begorrah, but them's the ornaments ye might be proud to wear!"

Shortly after, the canoe touched shore, and the Irishman's lower limbs were unbound and he placed upon his feet.

"Just sarve my arms in the same manner," said he, "and let's pitch in, in thure style. Be the powers but I want a little exercise, and that's the kind I always fancied. That's what I took to when I was a wee childer."

It is not probable that the Indians would have heeded this request, even had they understood it; but having no idea of the meaning of the words addressed them, of course Teddy's wish was not gratified.

Securely guarded by his captors, Teddy walked ev-

eral hundred yards through the woods when he came to the encampment of the savages. Some six or eight were here waiting for their companions, so that the entire party numbered about twenty, all of whom were congregated together.

Teddy's great curiosity was to obtain a glimpse of his companion in captivity, Ruth McGowan, and he was greatly disappointed and surprised to see nothing of her. The Indians were gathered in an irregular circle around the fire, some smoking, some chatting, and others apparently asleep. While looking around him the Irishman's eyes fell upon her, and the cause of her escaping his notice was immediately manifest.

The savages had thrown a brilliant crimson shawl over her shoulders, and her hair being as jetty black as theirs, and her head bowed, he had taken her for one of their number when he had first looked upon them. Ruth sat, as we have said, with her head bowed, for her heart was stricken with grief. The picture of the old man, Mr. Smith, springing up with his wild look, and running through the trees, pursued by his merciless enemies, was ever before her. She could not drive it from her, and shudder after shudder ran through her frame, and the tears trickled thick and fast between her fingers.

How changed since yesterday! Suffering, misfortune and death had come upon them, and separated her from him who was dearer than any relative could be! All alone!—alone!

No, she was not all alone! There was One who was ever nigh her—who never lost sight of His stricken ones, and who only could comfort her in this dark hour which had come upon her. To Him she turned, as the human heart will turn, when bleeding and lacerated, and refusing to be comforted by any sympathy the world can give.

But it was hard to be separated from all kindred.

The thought was loathsome and full of abhorrence, that she, an unprotected woman, was alone among a party of bloodthirsty savages. She hardly dared look upon them, and yet looking through her tears, she ventured to steal a glance at them. How her heart leaped as her gaze rested upon the broad, jovial face of Teddy, the Irishman, his pitying blue eyes fixed upon herself. Removing her hands, she looked up, and with a mournful smile returned his nod of recognition. Comprehending the question her very looks formed, the quick-witted Irishman replied,

“Yes, I’m the only one beside yourself that the haythen have, and they wouldn’t have got me if I hadn’t struck at one of ’em and missed ’em. Ye just keep quiet me jewel and you’ll hear of Teddy agin.”

A sort of consultation was now held among the Indians relating to the prisoners, but to those who were not, the debate being as to what means should be employed to capture them also. After a protracted discussion, it was decided that the whole party, with the exception of enough to guard the prisoners, should cross over to the island and boldly attack them.

This decided upon, the preparations were instantly completed, and the warriors moved down to the bank, leaving Ruth and Teddy to the guardianship of two of their number. At the very moment of reaching the river, they descried the two whites as they climbed upon the flat boat.

This caused a halt and a further debate. Large as was the Indian party, a majority were opposed an assaulting the stronghold. They had already learned enough of their mettle to understand that this would be a dangerous undertaking upon their part, and many more were convinced that there was no hope at all, of success.

It was finally decided to give up the hope of securing the remaining whites by this means. The sagacious Indians suspecting the relation which existed

between one of them and one of the captives already in their possession, believed a much better opportunity would be offered. Love will play the *wild* with any man, and lead him to attempt deeds, which, in his cooler moments, he would pronounce madness. So they were content to bide their time.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NIGHT VOYAGE DOWN THE RIVER—SINGULAR
APPEARANCE—THE DEPARTURE.

Huddled together in the densest portion of the wood on the island, were the little band of fugitives. While the fitful tumult of deadly strife was going on around them, they had been compelled to sit still and not raise a hand either on the defensive or offensive.

To McGowan especially this was exceedingly galling. Strong, ambitious and genuinely brave as he was, he longed to give the persecuting redskins a taste of his temper, and more than once he clutched his rifle with a resolve to go to the assistance of his friends. But there were more helpless ones that it was his duty to guard. He had agreed to remain by these unless called forth by imperative necessity.

The death of his old comrade Smith was a severe trial to him as well as to his family. He was stricken down so suddenly that he had scarcely time to realize it until now, when he sat quiet and meditative. Mrs. Smith had been bowed with grief ever since. Her smothered sobs now and then reached the ears and hearts of those around her, as she vainly endeavored to keep down her emotion.

Abram Smith sat stern and silent, grasping his gun and looking around him, as if longing for a chance to revenge the death of his parent. No evidence of feeling escaped him, but "still waters run deep," and there can be no question but that the inmost recesses of his heart were deeply stirred.

As the night advanced and darkness increased, the fugitives gathered more closely together. In addition to the distress of mind they were exceedingly hungry, and their condition was therefore as uncomfortable as could be well imagined.

Suddenly a light footstep caught the ear of the two sentinels, and as they looked up they distinguished two forms that glided insiduously among them. The assuring voice of Napyank was immediately heard.

"Don't be skeart; it's us."

"We are glad of your return; we're beginning to get lonely."

"And hungry too, I make no doubt."

"You are right there, if you refer to myself, and there can be no doubt but that the others are in the same condition."

"Well, I tried to get you a bite, and succeeded, I think. It won't do to start a fire, so I'll hand it round."

"That is what you called a bundle of clothes?" remarked the young man. "You were very prudent to say the least."

The thoughtful hunter had managed to secure and cook some game, which he passed around to the distressed fugitives. It was partaken of with a keen relish, despite their gloomy situation, and each was filled and refreshed.

"Now," said McGowan, when they had finished, "it seems to me it is time we began to think of getting from the island. God help poor Ruth! what is to become of her?"

"She'll be rescued," was the hearty response of the hunter.

The agonized father caught at the words as a drowning man at a straw.

"And how can that be done!"

"In a great many ways; *it's to be done*; that's settled."

"I don't see Teddy with you."

"He has gone after Ruth, and we are going to follow him in a few hours."

"God grant you success."

At this juncture Mrs. McGowan fell into such agonized lamentations that all were compelled to quiet until she could recover. The hunter then said,

"The Injin shave all left the island, but there is no telling when they may come back again. So the best thing we can do is, to leave it while we have the chance."

"But Ruth——"

—"Will be attended to. We are just going to put you into a place of safety, where you can stay until we come back. There's a considerable slice of meat left, and we don't expect to be gone more than a day or two, and maybe not as long as that."

"How are we going to leave?"

"On a raft."

"And have you it ready?"

"No; but won't take us long. As you have been setting here a good while. Suppose I take you and Abe to help me and leave young Smith to stand guard,"

This was quite a relief to McGowan and Smith, and the proposal was gladly accepted by them, while Stoddard, the younger, experienced a mournful pleasure in remaining behind and attempting to comfort his mother.

"I have noticed" said the hunter, as they made their way to the upper portion of the island, "that there is a powerful lot of drift wood lying around here."

"Can't we get considerable material from the flat boat!"

"Sartinly—sartinly; I didn't think of that."

"You have no fear of the Indians; have you?"

"I'm purty sartin there aint one upon the island, but I think they'll be back some time afore morning."

"Then we can't leave too soon."

"You're right this time."

A few moments later and they reached the island's margin, where the great dark hulk of the flat-boat was seen grim and silent, as if it had never looked upon the deadly affray between men. Cautioning his companions to remain silent, the hunter made ready to board it. He experienced some apprehension, as he cautiously walked toward it, and he stopped a few feet in the water, placed his hand on the gunwale he paused a moment and listened.

All was still save the soft wash of the current against the side of the flat-boat.

Waiting but a moment, he leaped lightly over and came down upon the deck. Even then he was somewhat apprehensive of danger. It was not until he had traveled every portion of it, that he felt entirely free from a shivering anticipation of a blow from behind. Firmly convinced at length that he was alone upon the unlucky craft, he called his companions to approach. By their united efforts they loosened the cumbersome roof of the cabin, and let it into the water. It was their intention to let it down easily, but its great weight precipitated it into a loud splash that caused each to start with alarm.

"We must be expeditious," said McGowan, who seemed to be in a constant dread of the return of the Indians. "They'll begin to suspect something is going on, and there'll be half a hundred over here before we know it."

"Don't be too skeart," said Napyank, who was ever cool and collected.

All three busied themselves in collecting the drift-wood. A large portion of this consisted of goodly-sized trees, which had lain in the sun until thoroughly dried, and was therefore as buoyant as cork. These were secured together by withes until a goodly-sized craft was constructed.

"It will take more wood than we can get to float all of us."

"What shall we do?"

"We have enough to float the two women. The rest of us must keep in the water and swim along with it."

To test the structure all three got upon it and floated downward by the island. It bore them well, and gave them considerable confidence in it. At the lower portion it was drawn upon the beach, and Smith remained to watch it, while the others went into the wood in quest of their friends.

The latter were found quiet and patient, waiting for the summons to take them from the island. No time was lost by delay, and it seemed to the silent Abram that his comrades had been gone scarcely five minutes, when they all came silently out of the wood and stood beside him.

The darkness by this time had so increased that the objects were scarcely visible a dozen feet away. This was all the more favorable to the fugitives who fully appreciated the importance of improving this advantage that might not come to them again.

Some delay was occasioned by the timidity of the females who were fearful of trusting themselves upon the raft. It was not until the hunter and McGowan had demonstrated their buoyancy, that they were willing to trust themselves to the current. The rifles of the party were placed upon the raft, and shoving it gently forth the entire party commenced floating down stream.

The four men clung to the raft with their hands, it being scarcely disturbed by the additional weight. McGowan was the only man who was unable to swim. As he was carried off his feet and appreciated that he was really beyond his depth, a shiver of terror ran through him that almost unmanned him. None around him saw it, as he regained his usual self-possession in a few moments.

For the space of twenty minutes the party glided forward in this singular manner without a word being

spoken, when suddenly Joe Napyank whispered, "Sh! down! quick!"

The females did not comprehend him, until he repeated his order more energetically than before, and reached over the raft and twitched their clothes. They then reclined upon logs, but their curiosity was sufficient to tempt them to look around, and endeavor to learn the meaning of this sudden command.

Neither of the females nor those who had heard the word of caution, comprehended the cause of it. Young Smith and McGowan especially were puzzled. They peered into the surrounding darkness, but failed to detect anything. Stoddard was on the point of questioning, the hunter when through the deep gloom he discovered a bright point of light, slowly passing over the surface of the water. It had not the twinkle, glimmering glow, such as a lantern or a star would naturally have made; but it burned with a mild steady light similar to that of an ember.

What puzzled the whites was to tell the distance this was away. Stoddard and Smith at first glimpse thought it within thirty feet, but continually after it seemed fully a hundred yards. Regularly forward it continued to glide, until finally it disappeared as if it had been the ember of a torch suddenly thrust beneath the surface of the water.

During all the time not the slightest ripple was heard as explanatory of the singular occurrence. Smith turned toward the hunter,

"What is the meaning of that?"

"Some more of the blasted heathen."

"How, I don't understand."

"In a canoe. Didn't you see 'em?"

"I saw nothing but the light."

"One of 'em was smoking—that was what you seen."

"How far away were they?"

"Just make a guess."

"A hundred yards I should say."

"What do you think?" added the hunter addressing McGowan.

"I should say fully that, if not more."

Joe indulged in a suppressed laugh before he made answer.

"You're both mistook. I could put out that pipe with a mouthful of tobacco juice."

"Impossible! they must have been within a dozen feet of us—not a bit more."

"And they wasn't neither. Didn't you see the canoe?"

"I never once caught sight of it?"

"I seen it as it went by."

"What a narrow escape!" exclaimed McGowan, appreciating the great danger which had passed them so closely.

"How did you know they were coming?" inquired Stoddard.

"I hear the noise of their paddles."

"You have sharper ears than any of us if that is the case."

"Not at all; I expected maybe there was something up, so I jist let my ear drop below the surface, and then heard the paddles. You could have done the same if you only thought of it."

"But we did not; which is generally the difference between us. They might have run into us before. I should have seen them."

"Just let your ears drop under water, and tell me whether you can hear anything," said the hunter.

Stoddard Smith did as was requested, and detected faintly but distinctly the dip of a paddle. He spoke in considerable excitement,

"They're coming back again."

"Not quite, I guess; it is the same ones going away."

"God grant they may remain away," exclaimed McGowan, in an under tone, "They have caused us enough agony already."

At this juncture the hunter admonished silence, and for some time nothing more was said. Soon, however, young Smith observed Joe struggling as though he were endeavoring to change the position of the raft.

"Make for the Kentucky shore," he whispered.
"It is time we began to hunt the land."

"Do you want to go in at any particular spot?"

"No; you need not work very hard. Shove the thing gently and we'll land soon enough."

It was not long before the great wall of overhanging trees was discernible, and simultaneously all three felt their feet touch bottom. The water, however, was of sufficient depth to float the raft to shore, and it was run directly under a morass of overhanging limbs and undergrowth. This accomplished, the entire party, landed.

"Now, what is to be done?" queried McGowan.

"Sleep? all of you."

They were tired and exhausted, and the females making themselves as comfortable as possible, dropped off into a profound slumber. Abram Smith shortly followed them, so that two two adventurers and McGowan were the only ones who remained awake.

"Now," said the hunter, addressing McGowan, and speaking in a manner that showed he was conscious that all looked to him for advice and direction in this hour of danger, "there is no telling how long we may be gone; so you must not be frightened if you do not see us for two days. I have left you enough meat to last you, if you are saving. There is plenty of game about you, but you must starve to death before you risk a shot. If you can fix up any contrivance to fish you can do so but you mustn't build any fire unless it's during the day time, and then be powerful careful about it."

"Joe, we are but a short distance off from the sea

tlement; why not float on. We would reach it by morning—would we not?"

"I have been thinking of that. In the first place, you couldn't reach it by morning; it would take you well into to-morrow. You would be pretty sure to be seen, and a single redskin would have you at his mercy."

"But we might go into shore, as we have just done, when we found day was breaking."

"You might and you might not. Stay here until next night after to-morrow night; if we don't appear by that time, swing loose and do the best you can to reach the settlement; but don't go before that time."

"Good bye, and God be with you, and grant that you may be the means of restoring my dear Ruth to me."

Exchanging farewells, Stoddard, Smith and Napyank, the hunter, plunged into the woods and embarked upon their perilous undertaking.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE DARK AND BLOODY GROUND.—THE SEPARATION.

As the Indians had invariably come from, and returned to, the Kentucky side of the river, our friends concluded that the entire war-party was upon that shore, and it was therefore determined in leaving the island, that they should cross over to the same bank.

We have detailed the manner in which this was accomplished, and stated how the fugitives securely sheltered themselves in the wood, while our hero and the hunter started upon their undertaking, which, when all the circumstances connected with it, are considered can be termed as nothing more nor less than simply desperate. Two men, one of whom was almost entirely unacquainted with woodcraft, were about to attempt to rescue a captive from the grasp of a larger party of fierce and vengeful Indians.

The night was of inky darkness; the most favorable that the two adventurers could have desired. This fact, together with that of the Irishman being a prisoner among the same redskins who held Ruth may be said to have determined the two to make the attempt as they did. Teddy was quick-witted, and had encountered savages until he knew them "like a book."

Beside this, as we have hinted in another place, Stoddard Smith was led by the controlling love toward Ruth McGowan. So long as she was a captive in the hands of those who knew no mercy, so long would he be unable to find rest for the soles of his feet. No; he fully resolved that she should be rescued, or he should perish with her!

The darkness being so intense, young Smith experienced considerable difficulty in making his way through the wood. He bumped his head several times, before he dare rise to a perfectly upright position, and then could only discern the dim, shadowy form of his companion beside him.

"Whatever happens, or whatever you see," whispered Joe, "don't speak or start."

"Drat that limb! it has nearly sawed my neck off!" he involuntarily exclaimed forgetting the caution he had just received.

Knowing that the current must have carried them a considerable distance down the river, the hunter used the bank as his guide, and ascended a considerable distance, before he began to look about him for the savages. After having progressed somewhat over a quarter of a mile, he caught the glimmer of a light through the trees, and touched Smith upon his arm, as a caution for him to be upon his guard.

Making their way carefully through the tangled undergrowth, through hollows and over fallen trees, across brooks and miry patches of earth, they at length stood within a hundred yards of the Indian camp-fire.

Napyank's heart sank within him, for he understood at once, that the war-party had divided, and that neither of the captives was before him. When had the separation taken place? What direction had the other taken? How could its trail be gained?

There were questions which instantly presented themselves to the hunter's mind, and which, for a long time, he was unable to answer. Amid the profound darkness which held reign, it was very obvious that nothing could be done. Even the full, bright moon, was unable to penetrate with its light, the solemn labyrinth of the Dark and Bloody Ground. Nothing could be done until morning.

As neither Joe nor Stoddart had enjoyed any sleep for many hours, they both felt fatigued, despite the exciting situation in which they were placed. With-

drawing a considerable distance further into the forest, they both lay down beside an uprooted tree, and were almost immediately locked in slumber.

The sleep of Smith was deep and dreamless. It was not until the sun had been up several hours, that he opened his eyes. As soon as he recovered from his temporary bewilderment, he arose, chagrined that he had lost so much valuable time. To his surprise, upon looking around, nothing was seen of Napyank. Thinking, however, he should not be far away, he seated himself upon the tree, to wait for his return.

An hour passed away, and still no sign of his missing companion. The young man had whistled, and given utterance to all the signals he had at his command, but had elicited no response. He was now alarmed and greatly vexed; alarmed at the singular disappearance of his friend, and vexed that now, when every minute was of the utmost value to him, he was thus compelled to remain and accomplish nothing. At length his patience became exhausted.

"There is no use of remaining behind," he muttered. "The Indians have gone, and every minute places them further from me. I will follow them alone, relying upon my own arm, and the kindness of Heaven, for success."

Throwing his rifle over his shoulder, he moved resolutely off, resolved never to turn his back upon his enemies, until he had learned something of the fair captive they held. It was a desperate proceeding, indeed, for a single man thus to pit himself against a whole party of redskins, but our hero felt no hesitation in doing it.

It was now, too, that Stoddard began to experience the pangs of hunger. He had eaten very sparingly the night before, in order that the others might not want, and was so famished, that he determined to secure some food at all hazards. At the period of which we write, game was very abundant in this portion of the West, and the decision had scarcely entered his

mind, when several wild turkeys, their wings outspread, and their feet scarcely touching the ground, sped along within a stone throw of him. As quick as thought, the foremost was shot and in his hand.

The instant that Smith had secured his game, he regretted having discharged his piece, for he felt certain he had exposed himself to danger. Some of the Indians must certainly be within hearing, and would be attracted thither, by a suspicion of a true state of the case.

To guard against capture, he made all haste through the woods in the direction of the camp-fire, which had been deserted by the savages, in the belief that this would be the last place where his enemies would seek him. Upon reaching it, he was gratified to find a large quantity of live coals, and without hesitation, he plucked, dressed the turkey, and proceeded to cook it.

The bird afforded him a most needed and nourishing meal, beside furnishing enough for future use; and now, that his immediate wants were attended to, he sat to work in earnest upon the all important object that has brought him thither.

In the first place, it was necessary to discover the trails of the two war-parties, and in the first place, he failed completely. Although gifted with more than ordinary intelligence, sagacity, and cunning, he had not yet learned enough of wood craft to follow the faint footsteps of the wild Indians through its labyrinths, when the traces left, were so faint that the human eye, unless trained by an experience of years, could not detect the least signs of the passage of any one.

Had the Indians proceeded with their usual caution, it would have been absolutely impossible for our hero to have followed them a hundred yards through the wilderness. But, believing that no enemy, that need cause them the least uneasiness, was in their vicinity, they struggled forward as carelessly as a party of school boys. This only, was the reason why our hero was enabled to follow them.

Smith, under the belief that they had penetrated further in Kentucky, for a long time examined the ground only upon that side of the fire. His efforts meeting with no success, he resorted to the opposite side, where the trail was discovered at once. It being impossible to find any further signs of the passage of the Indians in any other direction, he concluded that both parties must have gone this way, which, somewhat to his surprise, led toward the river. Keeping along on the trail, he found, as he had feared, that they had embarked in their canoes, and gone either up, down or across the stream.

"And how am I to tell which way?" he muttered, "I must run the risk of getting the wrong choice out of these three."

Smith, under ordinary circumstances, certainly would have been discouraged at the formidable obstacles which now rose before him; but one of his temperament, could never rest while the object of his choice was captive in the hands of the savages, and he, therefore, did not think of returning back.

"They cannot have gone up the river," he reflected, "because they have come from that direction. And yet, what reason is that why they should not have done so? Still it strikes me that they have not taken that course. They could have gone much more rapidly overland. If their destination is in Kentucky, it surely is not on the bank of the Ohio; it must be a good distance back from the river, so that they would only have lengthened their journey by taking to the water. From all that I have heard or read of these Shawanoe Indians, I have been led to suppose that although they range at will on both sides of the river, still their towns and villages, and their homes, in fact, is in southern Ohio. And what more natural, now, that they have secured their prisoner, than that they should return to their home as rapidly as possible? Still, it seems reasonable to believe, is the true state of the case, and I must cross the river again."

Stoddard was upon the point of venturing into the river, when his attention was arrested by a loud splash in the direction of the flat-boat, and to his surprise, he perceived several Indians upon it. Finding that he was not observed, he drew back and watched their actions.

A glance convinced him that they belonged to the same war-party of Indians, and were searching the craft for plunder. They had thrown over a sort of bench, which was fastened—bottom upward—to the stern of the canoe. There were some half dozen savages, who, a moment later, shoved off, and paddled down stream.

Their light craft shot rapidly forward, inclining neither to one shore nor the other. From this, his belief that the main body had crossed the river, was changed in the conviction that they had all gone down stream in their canoes; and that all that remained for him to do, was to keep these redskins in sight.

This was a difficult task indeed. Under the skillful guidance of the sinowy Indians, their canoe skimmed like a swallow over the water, and it required the most strenuous efforts of Smith to keep it in sight. Fortunately indeed, the wood, a few yards from the shore, was open, and his footsteps were not much impeded.

Hurrying thus forward, now and then darting to the river bank, he kept up the pursuit for five or six miles, the canoe all the time gaining upon him, until finally he lost sight of it behind a bend in the river.

Our hero was panting and perspiring, and in no pleasant mood, that, after all his efforts, he was compelled to fall behind; and he relaxed into a sullen walk.

“It seems as though everything is conspiring against me,” he muttered. “I have done everything in my power, and here I am at last, left entirely alone, without knowing whither a single one of my friends has gone. It matters little what becomes of me. A curse upon the infernal Indians that have persecuted me thus!”

He walked moodily forward for an hour or so, by

which time he had passed the bend in the river, around which the canoe had disappeared. The river at this point took a due southwest direction, running so nearly straight, that a view of several miles was afforded. Nothing of the canoe, however, had been seen. It had gone he knew not where.

Wearied and dispirited, he threw himself upon the ground, and endeavored to sleep. But he was too excited and nervous to rest ; and devouring what he could, of the remaining portion of the turkey, he threw the rest from him, and leaned his head, to reflect upon the best course for him to pursue.

He had lost all traces of the Indians and their captives. How he should ever meet Ruth again, it was impossible for him to imagine. In the impenetrable depths of the great wilderness which surrounded him, where the merciless redmen wandered for miles, how could he, a single, unaided, white man, follow them ? And even should he chance upon them, how could he wrest a captive from their jealous grasp ? What would be her fate ? A drudge, a slave, but he hoped no worse, unless she voluntarily took to herself an Indian husband. They might tomahawk or scalp her, but he believed they would do no more. But Smith believed that the honor of his betrothed was safe in the hands of her deadliest enemies. This knowledge afforded him unspeakable satisfaction.

And then there was the mysterious disappearance of Joe. Where could he have gone in the night ? Could it be possible that he, too, had fallen into the hands of his foes. Had they gained all of the whites except himself ? Had they —— ?

The explosion of a rifle broke the stillness of the woods, and springing to his feet, Stoddard hurried manly forward scarcely conscious of what he was doing. After running a short distance, he paused, and parting the bushes gazed upon a scene that thrilled his very being with the wildest of thoughts.

CHAPTER X.

A VAIN HUNT—THE INDIAN CAMP—DISCOVERY—PURSUIT.
—DESPERATE CONFLICT—A MEETING.

Joe Napyank, the hunter, was a possessor of a peculiarity, which, with those of his profession, is certainly rare. He was a somnambulist or sleep-walker. This affliction—as it may perfectly be termed—had taken him in extreme peril on several occasions. It once made him a prisoner among the Indians and it once effected his escape.

Joe was generally affected, when he had undergone some severe deprivation such as hunger or thirst. He lay down with Smith, and for several hours slumbered peacefully. But finally, while in a state of coma, rose to his feet and made off. He awoke to find himself lying at the foot of a tree, with a sensation of hunger, strong, gnawing hunger, a craving that demanded instant satisfaction.

He knew all at once that he had been indulging in one of his nocturnal walks and he therefore lay still until morning, by which time he had become so ravenous that he would have made a respectable cannibal, and despite the imperative necessity of his immediately rejoining Smith, everything else gave way to the necessity of food—food—food, was what he must have.

Impelled forward by this blind craving, he forgot his usual caution and paid little heed to his footsteps. The truth was his mind was in a morbid condition, and he was not prepared to act coolly and deliberately. His sensation was that nothing could be done until he

had satisfied this greatness of his system. After that, he could rejoin his young friend, and they two could carry out the objects of their expedition.

While thus wandering carelessly forward, his excited imagination detected a faint gobble in the wood as if a turkey were lost and was signalling to its companions; and proceeding stealthily onward, he suddenly came upon a large gobbler that was wandering disconsolately about as if utterly lost. Before it could get out of his reach, Joe had forgotten his usual prudence, and discharged his piece, succeeding in nothing more than wounding it.

It started off on a rapid run, and fearful that it would escape him if he paused to load his piece, he dashed after it at the top of his speed, and now began an exceedingly interesting chase or rather race.

All things considered, perhaps in the condition of the gobbler, the hunter could outrun it, that is when both possessed the same advantage; but the bird had a way of slipping through the undergrowth, dodging under bushes, and trotting over fallen trees as though they were not there, that gave him a great advantage over his pursuer.

The latter tore headlong through the bushes, sometimes a rod or two in the rear, sometimes almost upon it, his hope constantly maintained at an exciting point, by the hair-breath escapes it made from him. More than once, he made a resolute leap forward, and, as he nearly stumbled, caught perhaps the tail feather of the bird, while the creature itself glided through his grasp, leaving a most vivid impression of its tapering form upon his hands, which had slipped over it so nicely. Then again perhaps he struck at it with his rifle and pinned another feather to the ground.

It is a fact, to which all hunters will testify, that, in the exciting pursuit of their game, they can travel mile after mile with hardly any sensible fatigue. It is not until the hunter comes to retrace his footsteps that he comprehends how great a distance he has passed over.

The attendant, perhaps whose mind does not participate in the same excitement, is exhausted even in following the hunter.

Thus it happens that Joe, who would not have believed he had gone more than three-quarters of a mile, chased the bird for fully a half-dozen times that distance, at the end of which it did not manifest the least fatigue, the wild turkey, ~~as~~ our readers are aware, being a noted runner. With no thought of giving it up, Joe still pursued it at the top of his speed, occasionally making a leap forward at it, and the bird as often as cleverly eluding him as ever.

Suddenly he caught the shimmer of something through the trees, and saw that they were approaching the banks of a river. He was now sure of his bird; he had fairly earned it, there was no escape for it; and his torturing hunger was about to be satisfied.

Gracefully and majestically, as the bird reached the river margin, it spread out its wings, and, sailing through the air, landed upon the Ohio side and disappeared in the woods.

Considerably chagrined,—as who would not have been?—he turned back into the woods to cogitate upon his future action. Then, as he looked about him, he saw that he was lost. He might retrace his trail, but he now comprehended that he had passed over too great a distance to make this advisable.

While thus debating with himself, he detected a peculiar smell in the air, which he understood, at once, was caused by a camp-fire. Knowing full well that he was in a hostile country, he kept a sharp look-out upon his footsteps.

It turned out as he had suspected. He was close upon an Indian encampment. He caught a glimpse of the gaudy fantastic costumes of the savages through the trees, and approaching as nigh as he could, he concealed himself, and surveyed them as well as his position could admit.

It was with a singular emotion that the hunter re-

cognized this party, as the identical Shawanoes for whom he was searching, and who held Teddy and Ruth as captives. The party seemed to have lost several of their number—a half dozen or so—but there was no mistaking the others. The keen eye of the hunter recognized them at once. What surprised him still more, was that neither of the captives was visible. What had become of them? Had they been sent in advance in charge of a smaller party? What possible cause could the savages have for taking such a step?

These questions ran rapidly through the mind of the hunter, but there was another which unpleasantly protruded itself, and that was the one in regard to obtaining food for which, if possible was growing greater. There seemed to be but one course left for him and that was to take to the woods again. He was on the point of doing so, when he detected an unlooked for opportunity.

More than once he was sure he detected the smell of burning meat and the cause of it was soon explained. Some twenty rods or so away from the encampment of the savages, was a smaller fire at which a single squaw had momentarily abandoned her post, and the tempting prize was left unguarded.

The temptation was too great for the naturally cool-headed and cautious hunter. Running back into the woods a few rods, and totally unmindful of his eminent danger, he came in the rear of the fire, snatched the meat, and seating himself upon the ground, commenced devouring it like a wolf.

The first mouthfull was dropped most suddenly, it being so hot that his tongue was blistered. But he soon became used to, and in a few moments, had swallowed the entire piece, and was in the act of wiping his fingers upon his hair, when a shrill swoop broke the stillness of the woods, and turning his startled gaze, he saw the wrathful squaw standing within a few feet of him.

With the ear-splitting screech of this creature, Joe

Napyank, gained like a flash of lightning, a true idea of the fool-hardy recklessness he had displayed. Her onerics were continued and immediately attracted the attention of the Shawanoes, who had caught a glimpse of the white man, as he was rising to his feet, and their fleetest runner started in pursuit.

The hunter's frame was gaunt and muscular, and he was sinewy and fleet-footed. His Indian experience also had given him great endurance, and he now darted off in the woods at a rate that excited the admiration of his pursuers. The three separated, so as to make sure of the fugitive, and called all their energies into play to overtake him.

The forest for a considerable distance was open, and afforded a good field for the runners. The distance between Joe and the savages remained about the same for some five or ten minutes, when one of the latter discharged his rifle, and the white sprang high in air with a loud yell.

But he hadn't been struck. It was only a habit he had gained years before. The report of the gun gave an impetus to his flight which soon carried him far ahead of the redskins. Dodging hither and thither, flitting in and out among the trees, it was impossible for the latter to gain anything like an accurate aim, and they did not repeat the attempt to bring him down.

All was now going well for the fugitive, and he would have escaped had he understood the woods. But his ignorance was fatal. Directly ahead of him was a deep gorge, or ravine toward which the Shawanoes had managed to direct his footsteps, and unconsciously to himself he was running directly into a trap.

It was not until he was upon the very brink that Napyank comprehended his peril. His hair fairly rose on his head, as he glanced about him. To the right or left, stretched the deep yawning gorge, too broad to be leaped over, and offering no means of access except a sheer precipice, down which it would have

been certain death for him to have gone. Escape was cut off! There was no help for him! He was fairly at bay!

"It's all up!" he muttered, wheeling around and placing his back toward the gorge. "Joe Napyank is fairly cornered and now there is going to be a row!"

The three Shawanoes, as we have already stated, had separated during the pursuit and were now quite a ways apart. The center one being directly in the rear, was the closest to the fugitive, and came up to him, considerably in advance of the others. This was fortunate in one sense for the hunter, as for the time, he had but a single opponent with which to contend.

The lithe, agile Indian was all eagerness to secure the white as his captive, and forgetful of the axiom "a stag at bay is a dangerous foe," that is, if he had ever heard it, he halted not in the least, but came at full speed toward him. When within a rod or two, he whirled his tomahawk in a circle over his head, and hurled it with tremendous force full at the breast of his dauntless adversary. The latter from the motion of his arm comprehended what was coming, and dodging his head with lightning-like quickness, the weapon flashed over him, and went spinning end over end down the ravine.

Both the combatants had dropped their rifles and drawn their knives. With an exultant shout the warrior leaped forward, and swinging his knife, sprang upon his adversary. In a twinkling both were disarmed in a singular manner.

It so happened that the two struck at each other at precisely the same moment, the knives encountering with such force, that the Shawanoe's shot out of his hand, and followed his tomahawk down the ravine, while the hunter's was turned with such suddenness that it fell to the ground several yards distant. Both were now entirely disarmed, and glancing at each for a

second like infuriate tigers, they closed in the struggle of life and death.

In point of strength the two were very nearly equally matched. Joe had the advantage of being an expert wrestler, while the savage was a perfect novice. The hunter had scarcely grasped him in his long arms, when, with a peculiar thrill, he felt that the victory was his own.

By a trick, or rather act, well known to skillful wrestlers, the white man twisted the redskin off his feet, and throwing him with stunning violence upon the ground fell heavily upon him. Permitting him to rise, he repeated the thing again and again, until the savage became so exhausted as to be perfectly helpless.

The cunning Shawanoe had noticed where the knife of his adversary lay, and each time that he went down, he managed to work himself nearer it. The hunter did not notice his stratagem, until the savage clutched it, and as if rejuvenated by his advantage sprang to his feet, and confronted him with the weapon.

Not the least daunted—for Joe was terribly excited—he closed again with his adversary, receiving an ugly wound in his arm as he did so. At this moment he heard the outcries of the other two Shawanoes, and driven to fury by his imminent peril he gathered all his strength in one mighty effort, and grasping the warrior around the waist, he lifted him clear from his feet, and flung him like an infant over the precipice.

Down like a meteor through the dizzy air, shot the Shawanoe, with his arms clutching wildly at vacancy, spinning from crag to crag with his awful cry coming up like the wail of some lost spirit!

The struggle occupied scarcely a fifth of the time we have taken in describing it. Impelled by the most implacable hate on each side, the blows were quick and fierce, and the termination speedy and tragic. A shriek when the two encountered, a few blows and stunnings, another struggle more desperate than the others, and it was ended.

Joe had secured his knife before throwing the savage into the ravine, and with this single weapon he confronted his two foes. They were both about the same distance from him and he was in doubt whether to expect their united visit at the same moment, or whether they were going to attack him singly. The latter proved to be the case.

One of the Indians seemed to be a sort of chief, or, at least, superior in authority, to the other; for waving his hand for him to keep his distance, he advanced upon the white man, with the manifest resolve of disposing of him without aid from any one else.

The savage was a much more formidable foe than the other, and Joe Napyank, being greatly exhausted from his recent terrible struggle, he was in a poor condition to receive him. Nevertheless there was no avoidance, and he showed an undaunted front. The Shawanoe halted a moment, as if to decide upon the best methods of attack, and then with the same yell, as his predecessor gave, he sprang forward.

He had passed over half the intervening space, when he gave utterance to another outcry, not of exultation, but of agony, and throwing up his arms, fell dead!

The hunter had caught the report of a rifle, and saw a red spot appear on the forehead of the Indian, so that he understood instantly that he had been shot. The remaining aborigine, having seen all, displayed his common sense by turning on his heel, and fleeing at the top of his speed.

But whence had come this shot so opportunely? What friend had he in the Dark and Bloody Ground? How came he to be here at the critical moment?

Joe looked inquiringly around, and for the space of a few moments, his question remained unanswered. But while still wondering, who should step forth to view but Stoddard Smith?

"Just in time, it seems!" he exclaimed cheerily as he came forward and grasped his hand.

"I never was so glad to see a man in my life. How came you to be here at this time?"

"Looking for you, and what made you leave me?"

A few words explained all.

"It was Providence that brought me here, added Young Smith. "I think he is smiling on our efforts to obtain Ruth."

"She isn't far away. We'll travel together after this."

"Hope so. You at least have found it rather dangerous to be alone. But are there no other Indians in the neighborhood?"

"Yes; and it's time we left these parts. I've an idea, as I said, that Ruth and Teddy ain't far away; so let's tramp."

And once more, our two friends set about accomplishing the direct object of their expedition.

CHAPTER XI.

TEDDY O'DONNELL AND RUTH MCGOWAN—IRISH SHREWDS-
NESS—A PUGILISTIC TRIUMPH—THE INDIAN FIGHT—
LIBERATION.

It was one of those singularly fortunate occurrences that rarely happen more than once in a lifetime, that made Teddy the Irishman a prisoner in the hands of a body of Indians, possessing some claims—although it must be confessed rather slight—to envalry. The identical chief of the party had once been made a prisoner by Teddy and a celebrated scout, and on that occasion was treated as a lawful prisoner of war, and formally released.

The leader being a genuine Indian never forgot the kindness. He was not one of the original party that captured the Irishman upon the flat-boat, but when he was brought ashore he recognized him at once. Teddy with all his shrewdness, contended that every Indian looked precisely as did all other Indians, and he therefore failed to suspect his identity.

The party, as has been already hinted, divided; about a dozen, among whom was the chief just referred to, taking charge of the two captives and starting on a direct line for the Indian towns in the valley of the Piqua.

To the surprise of both they were allowed to walk side by side and no restraint was placed upon their conversation. No burdens or indignities were imposed upon each, and the chief seemed to graduate the pro-

gress of the party to the disposition and strength of the girl.

"Why do they not kill us?" asked Ruth, after Teddy had related the particulars of his capture, and the situation in which he had left his friends upon the island."

"Injins doesn't always do things in that shyle. It's meself that has been a presn'r among em afore this, and they didn't kill me but once. That time I broke me neck, but it was speedily set and mended agin."

"Will they not slay me?"

"I hardly think so. How would ye like one of these copperskins for a husband?"

The look of detestation and horror which answered this, made the Irishman regret his attempt at a joke

"Please don't worry about this matter. It's the habit of these same gentlemen to ax for a wife afore they take her. But the way that chief views yourself and me, he has taken a strong notion to one of us. P'rhaps he has a bootiful daughter and mither at hum, and he is adminin' me as a future husband for one of 'em."

The genial, good-natured air of the Irishman had its effect upon Ruth, who for the time may be said to have forgotten her captivity.

"Why, Teddy, would you like one of those dusky beauties for a life partner?"

"I couldn't tell very well till I tried, as the man said when he was recommended to die by drowning; but one of 'em might do till I got tired of——. Begorrah! but Miss Ruth, does ye observe how that chap keeps his eye upon me? If I'm not as greatly mistook than I ever was in my life, I've met him afore."

Teddy tried to recall the features. The more he looked at him the more certain was he that the two had encountered previously. But he was unable to

place him in his memory; and the Indian, observing that he was subject to remark and scrutiny, turned his face away, and henceforth remained out of view as much as possible.

"Oh!" said Ruth, relapsing into her former despondency, "Are we ever to see our friends again?"

"Of course we are although we may be subjected to slight delay in the same. I expect to meet them considerable soon."

"But how—how shall we do it?"

"Can't exactly tell yet, but we'll all turn in due season. They'd get tired of keeping us perhaps after awhile and give us leave to walk away."

"Do they ever do such things?"

"I can't say they do," laughed Teddy, who hardly expected the earnestness manifested in the question. "But as my ould friend Patrick Henry observes, there is no way of judging by the future but by the past, and looking to the past, I axes what has been the conduct of the haythen Injins for the last ten years to give me hope of keeping me for any considerable time in their clutches. I've heen there before and never staid."

"But, how has it been with me?"

"Yes, being with me makes the same rule apply to yer own government, so be aisy and don't worry and fret yourself which there is no good to come from it."

But Ruth McGowan found it hard work to extract relief from the ingenious sophistries of her companion. Look at it as she might, everything was gloomy and cheerless. Her cherished friends left behind her, instead of being able to come to her rescue, most probably were unable to provide for their own safety. It was therefore vain to look for assistance from that direction.

Perhaps her father and mother were prisoners at that moment—perhaps murdered. And her lover Stoddard Smith—where was he? Free, a captive, or dead? If either of the former, were not his thoughts turned to her, and was he wondering at her situation?

Should they ever meet again on earth—or were they now separated forever in this world!

The thought was saddening, and the distressed girl covered her face and wept. Teddy observing her sorrow remained silent awhile, but he was too cheerful himself to allow any unnecessary grief around him.

"If it was meself I wouldn't shed a tear to please 'em," he said. "Some of the laythen are just cruel enough to be pleased to see it, although it doesn't strike me that the chief is one of the number. He seems to be more tender-hearted than the others."

"But how can I help it when I think of my friends?"

"I s'pose it ain't aisy, but then don't think of 'em. Just think of the situation we bees in this minute. and then larf."

"Ah! it's hard work to see anything to laugh at—oh!"

At this juncture, Teddy caught his toe in a root and stumbled to the ground. His fall was so ridiculously grotesque, that several of the stoical bronzed faces were relaxed, and Ruth could not forbear a smile herself. Not one of them suspected it was a piece of strategy, got up for the especial benefit of the female captive herself. Teddy took his discomfiture good-humoredly.

"You are not injured, I hope," said Ruth; "you must pardon me, but I could not keep from laughing, you seemed so much taken by surprise."

"I'd much rather see you laugh than cry; it's more pleasant to all concerned. But did you see the unmannerly dogs grin at me? That chap seemed to enjoy it as much as yourself."

Teddy was going sideways, looking toward the savages as he spoke, when he again stumbled so awkwardly as to bring a grin into the face of every savage in the company.

"What yes laughing at?" he demanded in either

pretended or real fury. "Have ye no more manners than to laugh at a fellow that stubs his toe? Yer no christians but haythens, all of yes."

"Poor man!" said one of them in much sympathy, "much hurt pale face—sorry—much hurt?"

"Don't get too far wid your tongue or, or ye'll run agin the fist of Mr. Teddy O'Donnell, who understands the noble art."

"Ponr man—much hurt—sorry——"

A terrific whack took the tantalizing Indian directly in the mouth and he toppled over backward like a ten pin. As he went to the ground, the spectators all manifested their enjoyment of the scene. The Indian was stunned and bewildered for a moment, and then, as he rose up with his mouth bleeding, his flashing eyes and wrathful demeanor showed that he was fully bent on avenging the mortal insult. Drawing his knife, he was about to spring upon him, when the chief advanced and disarmed him of his knife and tomahawk, seeing which Teddy voluntarily resigned his, and the two confronted each other with the arms only that nature had given them.

It is possible that in that moment, that the dusky pugilist was sensible that he stood at a disadvantage but there was no retreat for him, and he therefore advanced to the attack.

Teddy "squared" in the most approved style, and danced around on his feet as if anxious for the contest to begin. Pausing a moment, the Indian made an awkward plunging blow, and received another shock in the mouth that laid him as flat as before.

Nothing daunted, he sprang to his feet and made at his antagonist more resolutely than ever. Teddy now toyed awhile in order to give the savage more confidence, and then getting him fairly at his mercy, he dealt him a more tremendous blow than before—one that completely "knocked him out of time," and ended the contest triumphantly in favor of the Irishman.

Upon rising to his feet, the Indian slunk among his comrades, who did not hesitate to jeer at him unmercifully, and to admire the conqueror in a proportionate degree.

This incident would be scarcely worthy of narration, were it not that it had an important bearing on the fate of the two captives themselves. Brave men always admire skill and bravery. This is especially true of an uncivilized people, who sometimes look upon a hero with a feeling of the strongest admiration.

It cannot be pretended that Teddy O'Donnell excited any such emotion as this, but he did produce a sentiment, that under Heaven, eventually proved the salvation of himself and Ruth McGowan. The leader, who entertained none but the kindest feelings toward him, was still doubtful whether it would do to allow him to go free, even with the explanation he might make to his brother followers. But now when he had witnessed his vanquishing of one of his best warriors he felt no hesitation in claiming the greatest favor for him.

In fact he was fully resolved that the man should be liberated but that the girl should be retained!

The chief now advanced straight to the Irishman and addressed him.

"Glad see you—me Wahlangson."

"Mighty glad to see you," responded Teddy, grasping his hand, and identifying him the moment he heard his name pronounced.

"Brave man," added the chief admiringly. "Like much."

Teddy understood Indian ways well enough to understand what all this was tending to. He felt that his case was safe and he did not hesitate to manifest a little of his joviality.

"Would yes like a thrial? If ye does, jist say the word and I'll do my best to accommodate yes."

The Indian did not understand the precise meaning

of this, at any rate he concluded to take no offence at it."

"Fight for Wallangson?"

"That depends on circumstances, as the cobbler—"

An exclamation from one of the warriors arrested their attention. The chief turned his head, and his immobile countenance for once betrayed signs of emotion. The whole party manifested excitement, and it was not long before Teddy understood that a hostile party of Indians had appeared, and a conflict was inevitable.

"Big fight—big fight!" said the chief. "Kill big fight—white man fight for Wahlangson?"

"Aye! that he will," replied the chivalrous Irishman, going into the trouble for the reason that he loved it, and because he believed it was policy to do so.

"Take her away," said he, pointing to Ruth.

"Yes—you take."

Teddy grasped her hand and led her some distance in the wood.

"Now do you stay there till the fight is done wid. It won't be long, and I'll soon be wid yes."

"God protect you."

Teddy hurried back, arriving just as the conflict began. Instead of fighting behind trees, as is the general custom of Indians, they "charged" on and the fight became hand-to-hand. This was just the thing for Teddy, who laid about him in the same ecstatic manner that he did before being captured on the flat-boat. While thus engaged he saw his old friend Wahlangson upon the ground, and hard pressed by two huge rekskins. Springing forward he sent one turning flip flap, which so relieved the chief that he regained the advantage he had lost, and soon stood on the same footing with his warriors.

The contest was short, sharp and decisive. Ten minutes after it was made the attacking party fled in confusion, leaving two dead and several badly wounded.

If Wahlangson had experienced a deep admiration for the reckless Irishman, he was now literally overflowing with it. Going up to him, he took his hand, and unloosely, with great agitation, said.

“Much like—heap like—big like—heap like—B--I-G like!”

“Begorrah the same to yes. I intertain the most unbounded riverence to yer honor, as the boy said to the snapping turtle”

“Want go home?”

“Well, yes, yer honor, I should rather like to do the same, bein’ as the ould woman will be out of praties, if I don’t help dig her some.”

“Go—go—Wahlangson willing.”

“Ye bees now—ye aint lying I hopes.”

“Go—no me follow—trail no touch—Wahlangson say so—no Shawanoe follow.”

“I axes only that condition—that none of yees attempt to toller me. Does ye agree to that?”

After considerable explanation, and by the help of pantomime, Teddy made the chief understand his wishes. The latter gave his promise, and gaily kissing him good-bye went off whistling St. Patrick’s Day in the morning.

Some considerable distance away he came up with Ruth, and gallantly offered her his arm. It need not be said she gladly took it, and the two speedily left the ground.

When the chief discovered that Teddy had taken away his cherished captive, he was somewhat chagrined, as this was more than he counted upon. But he did not follow. He was too much of a true Indian to molest one who had served him so well.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

Napyank the hunter and Stoddard Smith stood consulting together.

"We must now hunt the trail," said the former; and to do that we've got to go some way back into the wood,"

The two set out, and the greater part of the day was consumed in traveling. Toward the middle of the afternoon they struck a trail, which, after following for a mile or so, they became convinced was in seeking, as there did not appear the least evidence of either Teddy or Ruth forming one of the company. Finally when darkness closed around them, they were still at a loss, and decided to encamp until morning.

"Here seems to be as good a spot as any," said the hunter, halting by the side of a small brook.

"Sh! there is some one ahead of us," returned young Smith, pointing up stream, where a trembling light could be discerned through the trees.

"Let us see who they might be,"

The two stole cautiously forward. When a few yards away, they gained a glimpse of the party and heard some speaking.

"As I was about to observe when yeas interrupted me, we're now at no great distance from the river, and we'll reach there in due time, that is if we

travel. I s'pose you've no 'bjection to seeing your parents jist now."

"Indeed I can hardly content myself Teddy in remaining here until morning."

"Yees wouldn't be particularly angry if yees should meet that young man they calls Smith, I suppose?"

"Certainly not."

"Arrah! Miss Ruth: there is a great wild beast behind yees."

Ruth sprang to her feet, and glanced back, and instead of encountering the angry front of some wild animal, she saw—Stoddard Smith and Joe Napyank before her.

* * * * *

The next day as McGowan was beginning to grow desponding and hopeless, and had made up his mind to cast the raft loose at nightfall, and risk the attempt to reach the settlement, Joe Napyank and his three companions made their appearance. The wonderful skill of the matchless hunter had led them directly to the spot.

The sacred joy of father and mother, and the restoration of their daughter, of whose deliverance at one time there could scarcely seem the least grounds of hope—was too sacred—too holy for pen like ours to attempt to depict.

The raft was strengthened by the addition of much more material, so that it easily buoyed the entire company; and when it was fairly dark, it came forth from its concealment, and the fugitives committed themselves once more to the treacherous Ohio.

There were yet dangers and perils to be encountered, and it was not until the afternoon of the ensuing day, when the unsightly cabins of the settlement appeared, that the little party breathed freely, and felt that they were at last—*safe*.

The surviving Smiths became identified with this

portion of the West, and there are found there their descendants at this day, Joe Napyank fell during Wayne's celebrated campaign against the western Indians. Teddy O'Donnell lived a bachelor, and, as a matter of course, died at a ripe old age.* The grandchildren of Stoddard Smith were those who stood by his bedside during his last moments.

THE END.

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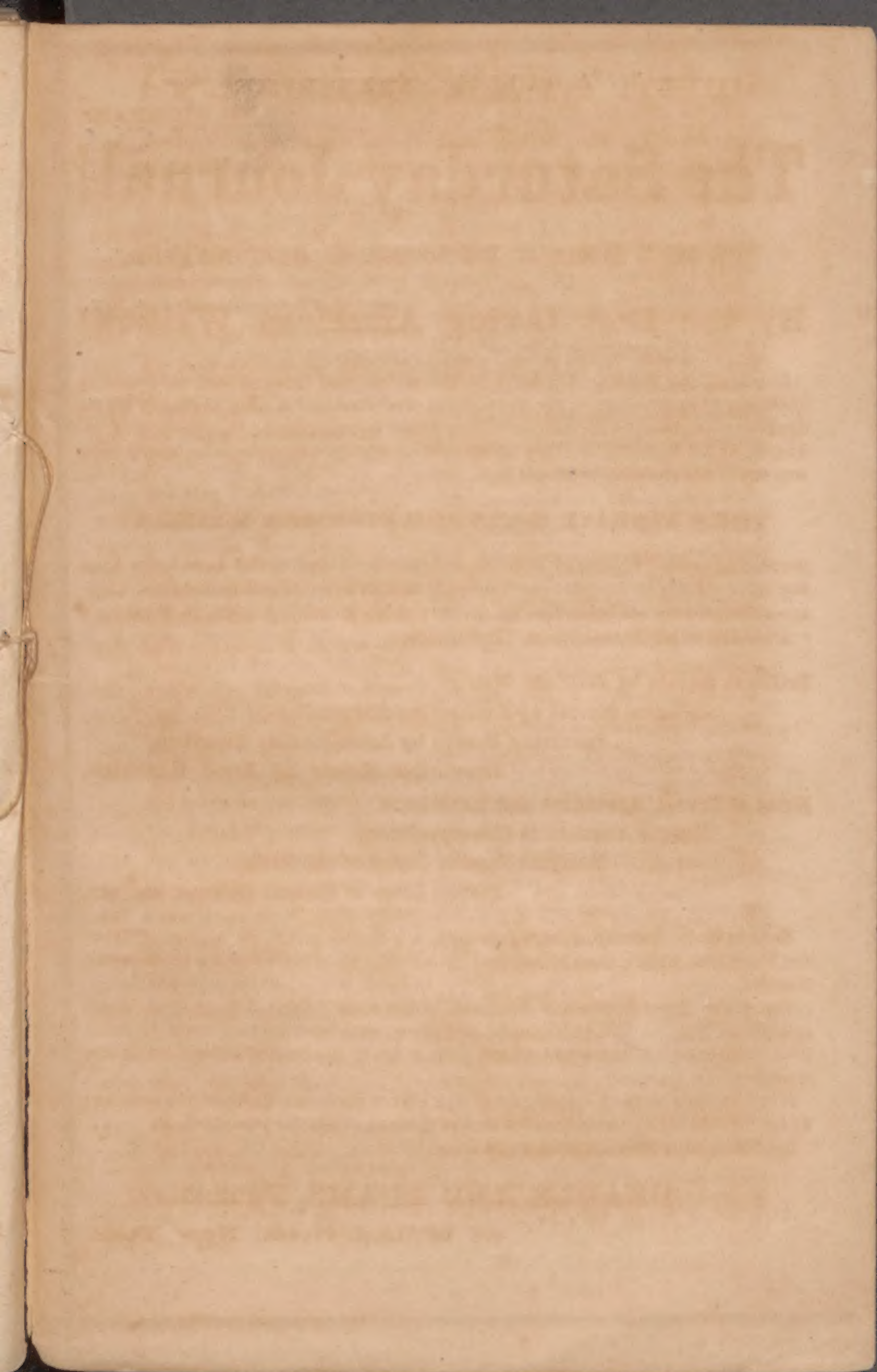
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